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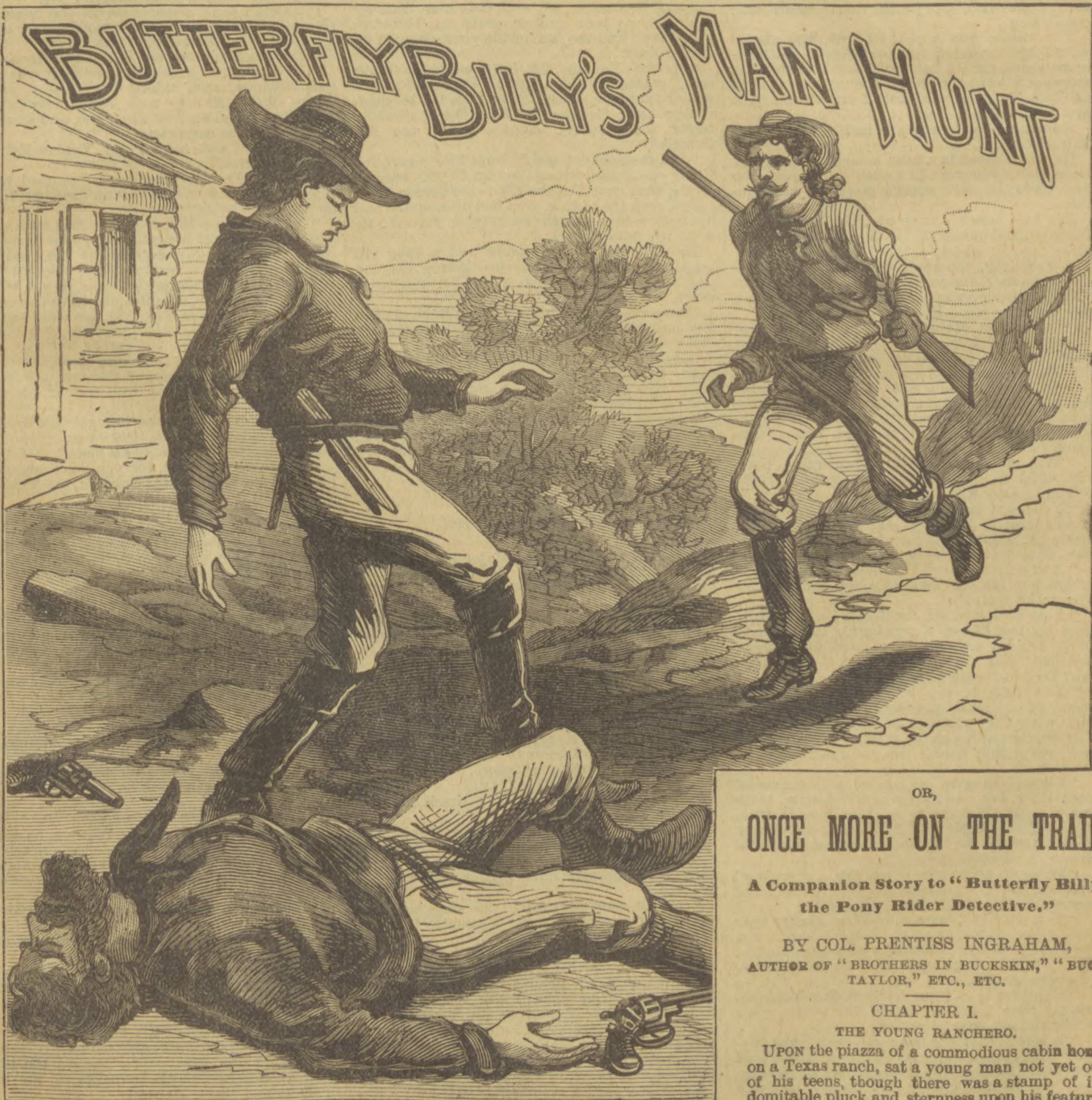
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BUTTERFLY BILLY SAID NO MORE, BUT REELED AND FELL JUST AS BUFFALO BILL
CAME UPON THE SCENE.

OR, ONCE MORE ON THE TRAIL.

A Companion Story to "Butterfly Billy,
the Pony Rider Detective."

BY COL. PRENTISS INGRAHAM,
AUTHOR OF "BROTHERS IN BUCKSKIN," "BUCK
TAYLOR," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THE YOUNG RANCHERO.

UPON the piazza of a commodious cabin home
on a Texas ranch, sat a young man not yet out
of his teens, though there was a stamp of in-
domitable pluck and sternness upon his features,
that caused him to appear older.

His face was one to win respect and admira-

tion, for it was intelligent, handsome and noble in expression, while his hair, dark brown and waving, was worn long, falling upon his shoulders and softening his look until some might consider him effeminate.

His physique was a fine one, and in his dress of velvet jacket, white pants stuck in cavalry boots, silk shirt and gold-embroidered sombrero, there was the suspicion of a dandy, although his attire was picturesque.

The cabin was a large one, of heavy logs, neatly whitewashed, as were also the fences enclosing the yard of a couple of acres and the outbuildings.

There were flower beds, shade trees and altogether an air of thrift and comfort resting upon all.

The house stood upon a hill that sloped down to a crystal stream a hundred yards away, and commanded an extensive view of prairie lands, here and there dotted with other ranches, and with many hundreds of cattle and herds of ponies feeding upon the plains, watched by the cowboys of the respective owners.

Coming toward the ranch were two horsemen, one a mile ahead of the other—the latter one leading an animal carrying a heavy pack.

The horseman in advance turned into the gate and soon dismounted and took a seat upon the piazza with the youth, who warmly welcomed him.

The visitor was a man who at first glance would be considered to have passed his three-score years, for his hair and beard, worn long, were snow white, but his sunburnt face showed no lines of age, and his tall form was straight and commanding.

Something besides years had whitened his hair and beard.

He was dressed in a neat homespun suit, top-boots and sombrero, and looked like a man who had plenty of this world's goods at his command.

His face was a strong one, kindly and sad; but he smiled pleasantly as he took his seat, and said:

"Well, Ray, you are to be congratulated upon your able management, for in the year that you have been home your place does not look like the same one. You are a born ranchero."

"Thank you, Major Mabrey, for your praise of my work. I not only enjoy the life I lead here, but I am anxious to improve the ranch and make a fortune."

"Ah, yes, I see, you wish to have an elegant home, and a fortune, to share with that pretty girl, Mattie Carter, the daughter of the commandant of Fort M—, of whom you so constantly talk."

"True, sir, she is ever in my thoughts, I admit, and I have mentally vowed that she should one day be my wife."

"You see, I met her so strangely, saved her from a fearful death the day the herd of wild steers broke out of the corral in the fort. Somehow, that made her very dear to me."

"And do you expect to accept this lieutenantancy which her father, Colonel Carter, obtained for you in the army?"

"I hardly know, sir, for if I do I will have to give up the life of a ranchero. Here I study hard each day to improve my mind, take care of my place, and am doing well, so, if contented, why leave it for life in the army?"

"The truth is, my three years' roaming in search of my poor mother and yourself, when you were the prisoners of the fiend, Captain Coyote, the outlaw chief, gave me a fearful experience of wild border life, its dangers and its horrors."

"I look back upon my life as a Government pony-rider, my wanderings as a detective, trailing Captain Coyote from here into Mexico, thence into New Mexico, California, the Rocky Mountains and the Overland Trails as a fearful dream, a nightmare."

"What an experience it was for a mere boy! and now that I am almost on the threshold of manhood, I shun any more wild life."

"You are right, my son, and I am glad to hear you speak so wisely about it, for I feared you were about to accept the offer of a commission. That would be to go again upon the wild frontier in active service."

"Here you have your home, a fair bank account, your herds of cattle and ponies, your books and out-door pleasures."

"It is true that you have not your dear mother with you, as in the olden time; but she is at rest under the shadows of the Rocky Mountains, and you nobly did your duty to find her and track down the villain who kidnapped her."

"In your grief for her I have my full share, as you know she alone was the one woman I

loved, and, captured with her as I was, by that same fiend, Captain Coyote, you may feel that her sufferings gave me untold sorrow, so that I forgot my own woes."

"She died of a broken heart under her sorrows, and my brain was well-nigh turned; had you not visited your mother's grave and found me there, there where I had made my home after my escape from the outlaws, I am sure I would have gone mad."

"But we are home now, and both your ranch and mine are prosperous, while I have wealth invested that brings me a handsome income, and all, Ray, all that I have is yours, for I have made my will leaving all to you, the son of my old sweetheart Helen Ferguson, whom I lost in the long ago, who was forced to marry for riches, and thus bring a cloud upon her heart for life. But, here comes a visitor."

Major Mabrey turned to look at the man who had been following him and who just then entered the gate.

"He looks like a peddler; but, tell me, Major Mabrey, do you believe that Captain Coyote is still alive—he and Yankee Kit?"

"Well, yes; but he must have left this country, to live on the fruits of his stolen plunder."

"If I felt that I could find him I would take the trail to-morrow, for with that man dead by my hand, my poor mother would rest better in her grave," and the face of the youth lighted up dangerously.

"As for Yankee Kit, I do not know if it is true," continued the major; "but I did hear a rumor that he was none other than the Mexican robber chief Sanchez, who has become such a terror the past six months along the Rio Grande."

"If I thought so I would hunt him down, for if any one knows where Captain Coyote can be found, that man Yankee Kit is the person."

Just then the visitor, who had dismounted and hitched his horses at the rack, came forward toward the cabin.

He had a stoop in his walk and a long red beard and black hair and eyes, giving him an odd look, while his form was stout and awkward.

A slouch hat shaded his face, and he looked like one who was a traveling tradesman and a shrewd one at that.

"Good-afternoon, gents, and let me introduce myself! I am Joshua Ledbetter, itinerant merchant, picking up honest shekels as I journey through life."

"Hands up quick! you are Yankee Kit and I want you," sternly cried Ray Royal the young ranchero, and, quick as a flash, he had drawn a revolver and covered the stranger.

CHAPTER II.

YANKEE KIT CORNERED.

THE action of the youth was so sudden and unexpected that it brought Major Mabrey to his feet in excitement, while the man under the muzzle of Ray Royal's revolver was seen to turn an ashen hue.

But he put up his hands with a promptness that seemed to betray a thorough knowledge of the border method of bringing a man to terms.

Still he said in a tone of remonstrance:

"I obey you, young man, but you are all wrong."

"Yes, Ray, I think you have mistaken your man," said Major Mabrey.

"Not I, sir, for I know this man well, though I have met him but twice before."

"I never saw you before, pard."

"Well, give an account of yourself, and we shall see."

"I am a traveling merchant, as I said, and my name is Josh Ledbetter."

"I am from the East, but have been on a trip through the country, and my pack yonder is full of goods."

"Such is your story, and I am surprised that you play the same game in this country that you did four years ago."

"Then you were a peddler, and went by the name of Yankee Ross, and you acted as a spy for Captain Coyote and his Wolves of the Rio Grande, and after your departure from the settlement we were attacked one night; this gentleman was captured, and for two years was my prisoner, and my mother was carried off by your chief and died of a broken heart."

"This is all Greek to me, young man."

"I will make it plain enough before I get through, so don't worry."

"Now, I shot your horse that night, and left two men to make you prisoner."

"They did so, and I came upon them as they were about to hang you."

"I interfered, and had to kill Percy Sloan, one of the men, to save your neck."

"They had swung you up, but I shot the lariat in two and cut you down."

"You fell heavily, and we believed your neck had been broken, when suddenly you sprang to your feet, mounted my horse, and escaped."

"Not me."

"Yes, you; for I noted, when I saw you as a peddler, that you had a peculiar scar upon your face, and again, the day you came so near being hanged, I saw that your left ear was slit in a peculiar manner."

"Major, I will pull trigger if he moves while you take off his hat and push back his hair and find the scars."

The man uttered a curse, but dared not move, while Major Mabrey took off the man's hat, and a wig was revealed, a curl of which fell over the crescent-shaped scar upon his forehead.

"There is the scar, Ray," said the major, and he pushed back the hair from over the ear.

"You are right, Ray, there is the slit in the ear."

"And remove the wig of black hair, and you will find that his hair is red."

"A fact! This is your man, my boy."

"Major, I have some irons in the house, so please keep this man under your revolver until I get them; but first disarm him."

"You shall rue this, boy," hissed the man.

"I'll take all chances, Yankee Kit," was the cool response, and, taking the belt of arms which Major Mabrey took from beneath his coat, Ray Royal entered the house, and soon returned with the manacles.

"Put your hands behind you, Yankee Kit!"

"I'll die first!"

But the revolver muzzle was jammed hard into his face, and he obeyed, and the irons closed on his wrists behind his back.

"Now, Yankee Kit, I wish a talk with you, and your life will depend upon your answers, for I am in deadly earnest, for did I tell the Ranchero Rangers that Sanchez, chief of the Wolves of Mexico was my prisoner, they—Why, what is the matter, man, for you have turned to the hue of a corpse, and you are weak-kneed, too? Sit down, and I'll give you a glass of whisky!"

The man did indeed show a sudden emotion at the mention of the name of Sanchez, the Mexican outlaw, and he sunk into a chair, his face wet with perspiration.

A glass of whisky was brought him by the young ranchero, and he dashed it off quickly when Ray Royal held it to his lips.

"It will do you good, for you were unnerved by my recognizing you as Sanchez, the Mexican Wolf."

"Well, as you see that I know you, it will show you how honest you have to be with me."

"Now I know you are up to your old game of playing peddler, to spy out in the neighborhood, and get points to aid you in making a raid upon us."

"But you are a prisoner, and mark my words, Sanchez, Yankee Kit, or whatever you call yourself, I intend to give you up to the Ranchero Rangers to hang unless you tell me the truth."

"But if you do tell me what I would know, then I will set you free."

"Will you do this?"

"Yes, if you will tell me the whole truth; so if you value your life, you had best not deceive me."

"I value life, so I will tell the truth; but you swear not to kill me if I do?"

"Yes."

"And will give me my liberty?"

"Yes, when I am certain that you have not deceived me; and, mind you, all that you tell me against yourself shall not weigh any more in my mind than what I already know of your evil life."

"Well, what do you wish to know, young man?"

"You have decided to answer all questions?"

"Yes."

"You are wise," was the laconic response of the Ranchero Ranger, and the major added:

"Yes, very wise."

CHAPTER III.

A STARTLING DISCLOSURE.

"I GUESS I'm wise, pards," replied the prisoner, in response to the remarks of the boy ranchero and Major Mabrey.

"Well, we will see how well you will show your wisdom, by answering my questions."

"Go ahead, young man."

"You are Yankee Kit, are you not?"
 "You've promised me protection?"
 "Yes."
 "I am Yankee Kit."
 "The same man who went through here four years ago as Yankee Ross, a peddler?"
 "The same."
 "The man I saved from being hanged?"
 "Yes, and because you did save me I meant to mark your gate so that my—"
 The man's face flushed and he stopped suddenly.
 "So that your men would do me no harm when they came this way?"
 "Well, I might as well say it."
 "You are Sanchez, chief of the Mexican Wolves?"
 "I guess so."
 "And you came here to ferret out information to aid you in your intended raid?"
 "You are a close questioner, pard, and ought to have been a lawyer."
 "Answer me."
 "About that."
 "You have seen this gentleman before?"
 "Oh, yes, he was the captain's prisoner for about two years."
 "Why did the captain keep him prisoner?"
 "Well, for two reasons: one was to punish him as much as he could from mere feeling of revenge, and the other was to force from him the secret of where he had hidden the gold he dug out of the California mines."
 "And in the end would have killed him had he not escaped?"
 "I guess so."
 "Well, now to yourself again."
 "Fire away."
 "You left the Overland Trails about a year ago?"
 "Yes, about the time you left."
 "How do you know I was there?"
 "Oh, I know you, Butterfly Billy, for you have ridden by me time and again, when you were riding Pony Express, and I could have killed you; but I did not, and more, I would not allow any of my men to do so, for I had not forgotten that I owed you my life."
 The man spoke warmly, and neither Major Mabrey, who sat quietly by, taking all in, nor the young ranchero believed that he was trying to gain a point in his favor by what he said.
 "Well, I thank you, for I know that you were often pretty close to me."
 "I was, and I was glad to see you win the name that you did, Butterfly Billy, for you deserved it, and I just laughed until my sides ached when you roped in Sol Soule, the Giant General."
 "I caught him at a disadvantage, for he was lying in wait for me, and I saw him from a distance, flanked his position and so got the drop on him."
 "But he escaped from the fort several days before he was to be hanged."
 "Yes; the Giant General was a terror, and they had against him the crime of having deserted from the army after killing and robbing some of his comrades, and he had nerve to take to the trails alone as a road-agent."
 "First he came and joined me and my men, Mounted Miners they called us, because we went horseback and got gold where we found it, but principally out of pockets of other people."
 "But the Giant General wanted to be chief and so we could not agree and he took to the road alone and did good work, too, until you captured him."
 "And where is he now?"
 "Back on the Overland Trail again, and once more alone."
 "What!" and Butterfly Billy started at what he heard.
 "It is a fact, Billy."
 "My name here is, Rayford Royal."
 "All right to those who know you as such; but you are Butterfly Billy to me."
 "You say that the Giant General is again on the Overland Trails?"
 "True."
 "How do you know?"
 "Well, he left the trails after his escape, and went East."
 "Then he drifted into Mexico and came upon me there dead broke, for you know I left the North about the same time?"
 "Yes, and came to Mexico and began to rob and kill again?"
 "I can't deny it as I am on the trail of truth to-day."
 "And the Giant General?"
 "Well, he remained with me until he made a stake and then set out for the old trails once more to work the road alone."

"And is there now?"
 "He is."
 "You are sure?"
 "I saw a California paper a few days ago and cut a slip out of it which I have in my pocket, if you wish to see it."
 Butterfly Billy at once unlocked the man's irons and he handed out of a wallet a slip of a paper which the youth read aloud, as follows:

"THE GIANT GENERAL AGAIN ON THE OVERLAND TRAILS."

"Our readers will doubtless recall that nearly two years ago a soldier of the —th Cavalry, stationed at Fort M—, committed murder and robbery, and then deserted."
 "The man was a giant in size, being six feet four inches in height, weighed two hundred and sixty pounds and was a perfect form, and an athlete, possessing marvelous strength."
 "He joined a band of outlaws known as the Mounted Miners, but soon after deserted them and took to the trails alone as a highwayman."
 "He time and again, single-handed, halted the Overland coaches and robbed the passengers, always killing those who dared resist him."
 "He was a superb horseman, and mounted upon a magnificent black steed, became the terror of the trails."
 "But one day he was captured by a Government Pony Rider, and carried to Fort M—."
 "His captor was a mere boy, yet the giant, like Goliath of old, had to yield to the young hero, who took him, single-handed, and presented him as a gift to Buffalo Bill, the noted scout."
 "He was tried at Fort M—, sentenced to be hanged, and just before the day appointed for his execution, made his escape by killing his guard, and disappeared, going no one knew where."
 "But ten days ago an Overland coach was stopped some thirty miles from Fort M—, by this same man who had won the name of the Giant General, as it was his fancy to dress in the full uniform of a general."
 "Since then other coaches have been held up by the Giant General, and twice has he taken life, so that he will find himself a hunted man, as Buffalo Bill and his scouts are to take his trail and run him to earth, it is said."

"Well, Yankee Kit, this is proof that the Giant General is again on the trail to rob and kill! But now to question you still more."
 "Have your say, Butterfly Billy."
 "Where is Captain Coyote, your former chief?"

The words came slowly from the lips of Ray Royal, the Ranger Ranchero, showing how deep was his feeling, and how anxiously he awaited the answer.

"You mean my old pard, chief of the Wolves of Mexico?"

"You know well that I do."

"Well, he has gone to try his luck again on the road."

"He was said to be your partner on the Overland Trails, and spied out work for you to do."

"That's about so."

"Did he come there when you did?"

"Yes, and went to Mexico."

"And now?"

"He has gone back to the Overland Trails."

"What?"

"It's a fact, for he is the spy to cut out the work for the Giant General, and they go shares."

Butterfly Billy took a turn across the piazza and back, evidently deeply moved.

Major Mabrey watched him closely, and the prisoner cast furtive glances at him as though not liking the manner of the young man.

At length he returned and asked in a voice that had become hoarse from suppressed feeling:

"Did you know the lady whom Captain Coyote kidnapped from here?"

"Your mother?"

"Yes."

"I know her."

"You mean you did know her before she died."

"Young pard, I said I was going to buy my life with the truth, and I'm going to stick to my bargain."

"Well?"

"Your mother is not dead."

CHAPTER IV.

ONCE MORE ON THE TRAIL.

WHEN Yankee Kit made the startling disclosure that he did, that the Widow Royal was not dead, he was fairly startled by the cry that

broke from the lips of the young ranchero, and the effect of what he said upon Major Mabrey.

The latter sprung to his feet as though in dire alarm, while Butterfly Billy seized the prisoner by the throat and hissed forth:

"Lie to me, man, and by Heaven I will kill you with my own hand; but tell me the truth and I will save you, even if my own life be the sacrifice."

"Unhand me, for your grip chokes me," gasped Yankee Kit.

Instantly Royal removed his hand, while in a deep, earnest voice came the words from Major Mabrey:

"Man, do not dare to build up hopes that must be followed by despair."

"Speak! is Mrs. Royal, the mother of this youth, yet alive?"

"She is."

"You mean she whom Captain Coyote kidnapped from her home here nearly four years ago?"

"I do."

"Did she not die at the Castle Rock Camp in the Rockies?"

"No."

"How know you this?" and Major Mabrey had assumed the role of questioner now, while the youth hung upon every word that was uttered.

"I was there."

"You know that Coyote kidnapped Mrs. Royal?"

"I do."

"Why?"

"She had been an old sweetheart of his, I believe, and he forced her to go with him."

"And she did not die when we were camped in the Rockies?"

"No."

"There was a lady died there and was buried," continued Major Mabrey.

"True."

"Who was she?"

"A young girl whom Captain Coyote had deceived, for he was a devil to make women love him."

"She was a Mexican and followed him from Mexico, and came into the camp at Castle Rock."

"Captain Coyote told her to go back home and leave him alone, as he did not love her, and the girl drove a dagger into her heart before his eyes."

"And she it was who is buried there in the mountains?"

"Yes."

"You are certain?"

"I helped bury her, and afraid of his Mexicans, did they know it, Captain Coyote gave out the idea that it was the lady prisoner, your mother, Butterfly Billy, and I had to take the men on while he took Mrs. Royal to a retreat he knew of, and where he afterward joined her when he became a spy for us on the trails."

"And Mrs. Royal?"

"Is with him now, I guess, for he clings to her above all things."

"Can all this be true?"

"You escaped, major, soon after we left Castle Rock?"

"Yes."

"Will you know how to find the place?"

"Yes."

"Did you open the grave, you would find that the body buried there had short, black hair, while Mrs. Royal's hair was golden, and very long."

"True, this would be a proof, Ray."

"Without doubt, sir, and I intend to put it to the test."

"You, Ray?" asked the major, in some alarm.

"Yes, sir; and I will tell you just what I am going to do; but first, my man, let me lock your irons again, for I have not the utmost confidence in you."

Yankee Kit held forth his hands and the irons were snapped on the wrists once more.

Then the Ranger Ranchero said:

"Now, major, I have pledged this man his liberty, but I did not say when."

"The promise was if he told the truth."

"Now, there is but one way to find out if he has told the truth, and that is for me to go and see."

"This man must await until I am assured, and within a couple of days I will leave for the up-country and see if I can discover the truth or falsity of what Yankee Kit has said."

"You know, major, that it was a whim of my mother's to have a room in this cabin built as strong as a prison-cell, and it has never been used."

"Now I wish you would come and make your

home here, and with the aid of Old Jacob and Phillis, my mother's faithful negro, you can keep the secret of having a prisoner in the house, for they will be true as steel, feed him and look after his wants.

"He can take his pack with him to the room, and I will put his horses with my herd."

"When I have discovered that Yankee Kit here has told me the truth, I will return and he can go his way; but if I find out that he has spoken falsely, I will return also, and will give him up to the Ranchero Rangers for them to decide upon his fate."

"You may be gone months!" whined the prisoner.

"True; and if so, you will have deserved the few months' imprisonment you have had, and may congratulate yourself that it is no worse."

"My God! do you intend to hold me all this time?"

"With Major Mabrey's aid, I do."

"I will aid you, Ray, and come here and take up my quarters to guard the prisoner."

"But if the boy dies, what will become of me?" groaned the prisoner.

"If aught should happen to my young friend, then your doom is sealed, for I am under no pledge to let you free, and you richly deserve hanging, Yankee Kit."

"Young man, I'll pray for your success and quick return. When do you go?"

"To-morrow."

"Ride of course?"

"Yes."

"Then don't take a trail that will lead you near the Rio Grande."

"Ah! you have your cut-throats awaiting there your return to lead them upon the settlement?"

"You're a guesser from 'way back, pard."

"Suppose you do not go back to them?"

"They'll recross the Rio Grande."

"I am not so sure of that, so it will be best to warn the settlement and send your Rangers out to look up this man's outlaw band."

"It will, Ray; but let us get him in his quarters before we do aught else."

This was done, the prisoner swearing terribly at his fate, and then his pack was taken into the strong-room, which was in a log tower at one end of the cabin, and his horses were turned out to herd with the ranch ponies.

The strong-room was large, comfortable and built with a view to being very strong.

There were iron gratings across the windows, and the prisoner, when ironed by one foot to a bolt in the floor found himself as securely held as though he were in a city prison.

The major moved over the next day, Jacob and Phillis were instructed as to their duties about the prisoner, and mounted upon his best horse and leading a pack-animal, Butterfly Billy once more took up a trail which he had followed for three years in the past to find it end, as he had believed in a grave, the grave of his mother.

Now he meant to follow it to the end, and until Captain Coyote was hanged, Ray Royal took a solemn vow he should never leave the trail he had started upon.

CHAPTER V.

A WOMAN'S GRAVE.

TOWARD sunset of a pleasant day, some weeks after the departure of Ray Royal from his Texas home, a horseman was riding slowly along over a western prairie and heading for a distant range of mountains.

The foot-hills at the base of the lofty range, formed several pleasant valleys, and jutting into a vale from a rugged ridge was a massive pile of rocks, so thrown together as to form a structure very like an old-time castle.

There were rude towers of rocks, domes and turrets, and the pile soared into the air some hundred feet above the valley, overlooking a beautiful vale, dotted here and there with mountain pines and with a small stream of purest water running through it and murmuring musically among the rocks and pebbles that formed its bed.

Beneath one of the trees, whose sheltering branches spread far over it was a grave, at the head of which stood a tree-trunk upon which had been cut with a knife a name and date.

It was toward this pile of rocks, known as Castle Rock by the guides and hunters, that the horseman was directing his way, for they arose like a beacon to guide him on his path.

The horseman was well mounted, but his horse looked weary as though from a long ride, and a pack-horse that trotted behind appeared to be almost broken down.

The rider was none other than Ray Royal, and he had come thus far on his trail to solve the mystery regarding his mother.

The sun set as he rode into the valley, and the shadows began to darken rapidly.

But over, under the shelter of the rocks, was the lonely cabin where Major Mabrey had dwelt for a year, a hermit guarding the grave of the woman he had so loved and who had been lost to him in life.

A fire was kindled in the little cabin, and with a broom of brush cut from the bushes the place was soon made comfortable.

The horses were unsaddled, watered at the brook and staked out to feed upon the grass which everywhere grew luxuriantly.

By the grave beneath the mountain pine the young ranchero stood a moment with uncovered head.

When last he had stood there, the day he had come there and found Major Mabrey living in the little cabin, he had believed that his mother's form reposed beneath the mound.

But now he could not so believe, after what he had heard from Yankee Kit; but he had come there to know the truth.

For the one who did rest there he felt respect, and uncovered his head over the grave of the dead.

He recalled his capture of the Giant General, and how he had aided him to escape death on the gallows if he would tell him where to find Yankee Kit and Captain Coyote, for through this means he would discover the fate of his mother.

The outlaw had told him then of his mother's death, and where to find her grave, and thus it was that he had found there Major Mabrey and with him returned to the old ranch in Texas.

Having seen to his horses the young ranger returned to the cabin and prepared his supper, which consisted of a broiled bird, some bacon, coffee and crackers, and feeling that he could rest he enjoyed the meal.

He knew his danger well, and that he might expect to have a band of Indians run upon him at any time, or perhaps prowling outlaws.

But Major Mabrey had told him that the Sioux were afraid of Castle Rock, as they believed it to be haunted by evil spirits among the Indian tribes, and twice during his stay there he had only to show himself to set the Indians in full flight.

Spreading his blankets before the fire, and throwing on some extra logs that would burn all night, the young trailer laid down to rest, and was soon fast asleep.

It was broad daylight when he awoke, and, hastily rising, he plunged into the brook for a bath, watered his horses and staked them where they could get fresh grass, and set about getting his breakfast.

This over, he took from his pack-saddle a spade, and set to work digging the dirt out of the grave.

He took off the sod, and placed it, with the loose earth, upon his india-rubber blankets, so as to leave as little trace as possible.

It was no easy task, for Captain Coyote had had his men dig deep, to prevent the body being torn up by wolves and other wild animals.

At length he came to the body, enveloped in blankets, and, moving away the dirt, he unwrapped the head from the smoldering blankets.

That would be all that he need see, for his mother's long, waving golden hair would tell the story, as Yankee Kit had said that the one buried there under the shelter of Castle Rock was a Mexican woman with short black hair.

The task was a hard one, and at times the youth was nearly overcome; but he would not yield to his feelings, and unwrapped the decaying blankets, until at last the head was revealed.

The hair was black as jet.

Evidently her hair had been cut short when she was in life, as she had tracked Captain Coyote in the guise of a boy; but it had grown in the grave until it was over a foot in length!

"Thank God!" cried Ray Royal, and then he added, slowly: "But would it not be better if my poor mother was in this grave, for her life must be a living death. I will find her, and Captain Coyote shall die by my hand!"

"I swear it, standing here in this open grave above the woman whom he forced to take her own life," and Butterfly Billy's voice was hoarse with passion and stern resolve.

With great care the young trailer filled the grave, replaced the sod, and threw the loose earth into the stream, thus destroying all trace of the grave having been opened.

Wishing to rest his horse, he passed the day

there, and the following night; then he started upon his way, and his course lay toward the Overland Trail.

CHAPTER VI.

THE LONE HIGHWAYMAN.

AN Overland stage-coach was rolling along a mountain-trail, and the driver on the box had just turned to his companion, and remarked that he guessed the danger of attack by road-agents was past, as they had never been seen that far east, when a horseman suddenly rode into the trail ahead of the leaders.

He was mounted upon a large, jet-black horse, which, as though trained, had at once fronted the coming stage and come to a halt.

The rider was a man of massive frame, and more, was attired in the full uniform of a general, epaulets, sash across his broad breast and all.

He certainly was a fine specimen of manhood, and with his top-boots, armed with heavy gold spurs, his cavalry hat, with its gold cord and long, drooping sable plume, looked like a grand picture.

His face was darkly bronzed, heavily bearded, and stamped with indomitable pluck and will.

His sword hung at his side, and in his belt were revolvers, also a pair visible in his holsters on each side of the horn of his handsome military saddle; but he held in his hands a repeating-rifle, and brought it to his shoulder while the stage was yet a hundred feet away.

"Jerusalem! I was a liar, for thar are ther Giant General himself," said Bob Burt, the driver, as his eyes fell upon the man and horse barring their way.

"Shall I shoot? Maybe I'll hit him," cried the man on the box, whose appearance indicated that he was a man wholly unfamiliar with the Far West, but who wore three revolvers and a bowie-knife in his belt, greatly to the amusement of the "natives," who had geyed him unmercifully.

"Shoot! yer darned fool-headed tenderfoot, shoot!"

"If yer does yer'll hev yer toes turned skyward quicker than a flea kin hop—put up ther weepin, durn yer, or I'll sling yer off ther box and press yer inter a book-mark with ther wheels."

Thus urged, the tenderfoot hastened to obey, while Bob Burt got his reins well in hand for the order he knew must come.

"You are covered, Bob Burt, so halt and hands up!" cried the Giant General, still keeping his rifle at a level.

"Hold up, ponies, for the General's got ther drop on us!" coolly called out Burt, reining in his team of six horses, and putting his foot upon the heavy brake, which brought the coach to a standstill.

Then he called out to those who were inside passengers:

"The General has halted us, pilgrims, ter collect toll, and thar are no need o' kickin'; but ef some o' yer thinks different and all join in, I are yer man ter help yer out."

The silence that followed the remarks of the driver showed that the half-dozen passengers were too well acquainted with the name of the terrible road-agent to offer any resistance, and so Bob Burt continued:

"Well, pards, ef it's no go, jist unloose yer purse-strings fer ther General don't like ter wait."

The Giant General had in the mean time spoken to his horse, which at once stepped slowly forward, while his master held the rifle to his shoulder the while.

Halting in front of the leaders, he called out sternly:

"Well, sir, who do you carry?"

"This tenderfoot lunkhead on ther box with me fer one, and I hopes yer'll take his arsenal, for he'll kill somebody with ther guns afore he reaches home, see ef he don't."

"You drew on me, sir?" and the Giant General turned his piercing gaze upon the young man who was now as pale as death and trembling so violently that Bob Burt said:

"Hold on, young feller, or yer'll shake yer-self off ther box and git hurted."

"I didn't mean ter shoot yer, sir, I mean General, only ter scare yer."

"I wouldn't want ter kill a man."

A hearty laugh from the road-agent greeted this reply of the tenderfoot, while Bob Burt said in a tone of disgust:

"Waal, ef you hain't a daisy jist call me a parson—oh Lordy, son, whar was you when ther fool-killer went round your town?"

"Come, Bob Burt, it is not talk that I want, but gold."

"What have you aboard?" and the Giant General still kept his rifle at a ready while he stood just before the leaders, so as to command each side of the coach and the box as well.

"You see this?" and Bob Burt pointed contemptuously to his companion on the box.

"Yes, and it has got to shell out liberally for drawing a weapon on me; but what is there inside?"

"Six pilgrims; mostly miners, I guess."

"Tell them to get out, one by one, first on the right, then on the left, of the coach."

Bob Burt leant over and called out:

"Pards, you is in for it, so you had best obey the General's orders and pan out liberally, for he don't take all a man's got if he acts square."

"One o' you git out on ther right side, and another on ther left, and so on until he calls a halt."

Something very like a groan of misery came from within the coach, but the door on the right-hand side opened, and a man in miner's costume stepped out.

Then the other door swung open, and a man got out on that side.

"Next!" called out the lone highwayman, sternly, and, as the third man had his foot upon the step, there came the rapid clatter of hoofs coming down the trail, and the Giant General shouted:

"You've got a guard, have you, Bob Burt?"

"Well, I've half a mind to mark you for trying to catch me in a trap; but we will meet again," and, wheeling his splendid black, he dashed rapidly away into the timber as the coming hoofs resounded just around the curve.

In another instant a cheer broke from those in the stage, as a horseman dashed into sight, and the clatter of hoofs told that others were coming.

But the "others" appeared in the shape of a pack-horse, following his master, who had already drawn up by the side of the coach.

"Butterfly Billy, or I serenely lies!" cried Bob Burt, the driver, and he sprung from the box and grasped the hand of the one who had just arrived.

"Yes, Bob, I am Butterfly Billy, your old-time pard, and I saw your trouble from the wind in the trail above, and so tried to scare the agents off."

"And did so, for he went a-glumming and said I hed put up a job to catch him, and had a guard along."

"It was the General, Billy, and he hev come back to his old tricks ag'in."

"It was the Giant General, Bob?"

"Sure!"

"Alone?"

"Yas, he goes thet way."

"All right, I hope to meet him some day; but can you take my traps on top, and may I hitch my horses upon either side of your wheelers, for I wish to ride with you?"

"You bet you kin, and I'll jist fire this tenderfoot inside ther hearse and you kin ride on ther box with me."

"I don't wish to deprive the gentleman of his seat, Bob."

"Gentleman? Now, Butterfly, don't insult ther poor feller, fer he means well; but he hain't no gent."

"Come, tenderfoot, pile inside until I finds another road-agent and then I'll call yer ter slay him."

The young man meekly deserted the box and crawled into the coach, while Butterfly Billy took off his saddle and pack and handed them up to Bob Burt, who placed them on top.

Then a horse was fastened upon either side of the wheelers, and Butterfly mounted to the box, the word was given and the coach rolled on its way once more.

CHAPTER VII.

ON THE OVERLAND.

THE Giant General was a bold robber, and took big chances to get booty, but he was at the same time a man who would not recklessly risk his life.

Since he had come again upon the trail, after a year's absence, he was well aware that every effort would be made to capture him, and, as he had already been tried and sentenced, he would at once be executed.

He knew that both soldiers, scouts and guards on the Overland had sworn to capture him; but he at the same time would not be driven from the trails.

He appeared at the most unexpected times and in the most unlooked for places, and his manner

of "holding up" a coach was such as to protect himself.

He always appeared quietly in the trail, some distance ahead and with a repeating rifle at a level.

He halted the coach some distance away, rode to a position at the heads of the leaders, thus commanding the driver and both sides of the coach.

Known to be a dead shot with revolver and rifle he was terribly feared, for more than once had some one in the coach leant out and opened fire but to fall dead across the door, and hang there limp and lifeless while the Giant General would in a sneering tone invite some one else to try the same game.

He had the people step out, one at a time, and advance toward him, placing their money on one side of the road.

He did not search a man, but made them give liberally, and then pass back, walking some distance behind the coach.

The next would do likewise, and when all had thus paid toll, he would order the coach to drive on and wait some distance down the trail for the passengers.

When it was out of sight he would dismount, count his booty and then call the men to pass in single file, a long ways apart, on after the coach, and if he thought he had been deceived by any one of them he would demand more toll.

Then, when the last one had gone by he would ride away, going no one knew where.

A woman he never robbed, nor a child or one he deemed really poor.

He always looked like a general in dress-parade, his horse was sleek and in good condition, and his weapons appeared always ready for use.

His "run," as it was called, extended some two hundred miles, and this made it very hard for the scouts and soldiers to know where to look for him.

Such was the man who had halted Bob Burt's coach that pleasant afternoon, and who, upon fearing a trap, had hastily decamped.

"Tell me something of the General, Bob," said Ray Royal, as the coach rolled swiftly along on its way, once more.

"Durn ther General, Billy, thar hain't nothin' more ter tell then that he strikes ther coaches once to three times a month, and hits it rich two out of three times."

"Oh, he's a darling, thet man are, and all thet hev been did ter capter him hain't done no good, tho' your old pard, Buffalo Bill, hev been hisself on ther trail of him."

"Well, he is a daring fellow, Bob, I admit; but it's a long lane that has no turn in it."

"You is right, Butterfly, and you caught him at the end of his lane once, and well nigh got him onto the end of a rope."

"But, Lordy, Butterfly, how you hev grown, but I'd 'a' know'd yer among a ton o' wild-cats."

"Yer has got more manly in yer face and form, but yer were always able ter do a man's work, yes, and did it, too."

"Now, I looks back and remembers yer nigh two years ago when yer began ter ride Pony Express on ther Overland, I kin hardly believe it are you with me now."

"Whar has y-r been, my boy?"

"At my home in Texas."

"Yas, and Texas are ther precinct fer making men on the shoot and who kin ride a rattlesnake."

"I know'd yer at a glance, though in them days yer used ter dress so gay, with yer blue velvet jacket, red jacket-cap, white corduroys, top-boots and silk sash, they named yer Butterfly Billy."

"And yer did look like a butterfly on ther wing when yer would fly by on yer horse going like a deer."

"And I intend to ride Pony Express again, Bob."

"No, does yer fer sure?"

"Yes, I am now going to Omaha to see Mr. Curtis, who I hear is now manager, to ask him to put me on the road once more."

"Waal I declare; but hain't you a leetle heavy?"

"Ah no, for I shall ride only the best of horses."

"If luck has gone ag'in' yer, Butterfly, and yer is hard up, yer kin jist git a grip on my chips, for all yer need, for I has a snug pile laid by fer a rainy day, and my friends."

"Bless yer big soul, Bob Burt, you are the same dear old fellow; but I do not need money, for I have plenty, I assure you, yet I thank you all the same, old man."

"And Bob, I want you to tell me where I can get some good black horses."

"Black horses you say?"

"Yes, I shall only ride black horses, and I want the best, no matter what the price."

"How many?"

"Well, half-a-dozen, for I have one there and a fine animal he is, but he needs a few weeks' rest."

"I knows of a couple, or three, but they is dandies, and high priced."

"Buy them for me, and I will pick up the other three between here and Omaha; but tell me, Bob, have you ever heard of the Mounted Miners?"

"Yas, they circulates around, Butterfly, stealin' horses, robbin' stations and sich low work, for they degenerated since you was here."

"And their chief?"

"Yankee Kit?"

"Yes."

"Waal, he must be dead, for I hasn't seen or heard o' him since you left."

"And did he not have a silent partner, as it were?"

"I guess so, for they was posted on rich hauls pretty well."

"You never heard him mentioned?"

"No, but they has a chief lying low somewhere, I is sart'in."

"You do not know where they have their retreat?"

"Anywhere and everywhere, Butterfly."

"You never heard of there being a lady among them?"

"Now, Billy, for the Lord's sake what would a lady be doing among that nest o' cut-throats?"

"True, but might she not be a captive, you know?"

"Yas, that might be, and they a-holdin' her for ransom money."

"Yes."

"Guess yer knows more than yer talks, Billy."

"I will tell you a secret some day, Bob, for I know you are my friend; but as I am going back on the Pony Riders' trails once more, you can jist let it be thought that I am dead broke, and had to do it—you see?"

"You bet I hain't no inmate o' a blind asylum, Butterfly."

"Jest trust me fer your friend, pard, and you'll find me around when I'm wanted; but that are a fine black o' yours, for see how he travels?"

"Yes, and the six others must be just as fine animals as he is, Bob. But yonder is the end of your run."

"Yes, and I hates ter part with yer, but I guesses I'll soon see yer flying along the trail like a butterfly again."

"You certainly will, Bob," was the answer, and leaving his horses and traps at the stage-station, Butterfly Billy, as he was known along the Overland Trails, went on to Omaha in the coach that left after Bob Burt's arrival.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BLACK HORSE RIDER.

GENERAL MANAGER CARTER CURTIS of the Overland Stage Company, and who was called by courtesy "General," was seated in his pleasant offices at Omaha, resting after his day's labor.

He had, so to speak, grown up with the road, and knew its workings from one end to the other.

Raised a Quaker, he did not like harsh measures, and shunned bloodshed; but he was a man to do his duty, and he did it so thoroughly that he had begun as a courier and risen step by step to his position as general manager.

"Good-evening, Mr. Curtis, and let me express the hope that you have not forgotten me."

The words startled the manager, for the voice had a familiar ring, and he supposed that all had left the offices.

Glancing up, he saw a form of elegant physique, clad in a suit of corduroy, top-boots, and slouch hat, and a face that was beardless, darkly bronzed and fearless, frank and intelligent, while chestnut-hued hair hung upon his broad shoulders almost in curls.

"Butterfly Billy! Oh, how glad I am to see thee!" and the manager grasped both hands of his visitor and led him to a seat.

"Sit down, my boy, and tell me what lucky breeze has blown you in this direction, fer of all men, I am glad to see you!"

"Well, general—"

"Ah, none of that, for the boys have dubbed me general to curry favor with me."

"Then I must be also in the swim, for I also wish to ask a favor, general."

"Granted, my boy, before another word is said."

"I wish to go on the Overland again."
 "Bravo for you! it is just where I want you."
 "As nominally Pony Express Rider, but in reality as a detective."

"Better and better, for I was wishing for you to-day, yesterday and for two months past."
 "There is work for you on the trail."

"I know it, sir, for the Mounted Miners are troublesome, and the Giant General has returned to the road."

"You are posted, I see."

"Yes, sir, I came through from the Rockies, and the boys told me all that had been going on—but read your letters, sir," and Butterfly Billy turned to a window as a man entered with a bundle of letters.

The manager hastily tossed one after the other aside until he came to two that he opened and read.

He smiled as he did so, and then said:

"Well, Butterfly, you have been up to your old tricks again."

"How so, sir?"

"Here is a letter from our paymaster, who was on Bob Burt's coach coming East, and he writes that but for you he would have been robbed of a large sum of the company's money, for though he was dressed as a miner he was well known to the Giant General, who would have recognized him."

"This other letter is from Bob Burt, and it is a dandy in the way of writing and spelling, but it is to the point, for he says that you dashed up and saved the outfit from being robbed by the Giant General, and asks that you be put on with big pay, as he thinks you must be dead broke."

"No, General Curtis, I am not broke; but I do wish a place as rider again, but with my own time when needed, for I have cut out work which I wish to do."

"You shall be a nominal rider, Butterfly, at your will, and in reality a mounted detective to do as you deem best and go as you please, and your pay shall be the largest that the company will pay, for we all know your worth and what you have done for us in the past, yes, and now, for the paymaster must have had twenty thousand at least with him, and this you saved to us."

"I thank you, sir, and I will get my horses at once."

"Fortunately we have a drove of fine Kentucky animals just in and you shall have your pick."

"I wish to buy and own my horses, general, and it is a whim of mine to have only black animals and the very best."

"Carry out any whim you wish, Butterfly, and now I think of it I saw half a dozen fine black horses in the lot; but let me tell you right here, Master Butterfly Billy, that I shall give you the horses you select, and the company will pay the bill, and if you offer to do so I shall not only feel deeply hurt but angry."

"Now, come, and we will go out to the corral and select the nags."

The manager led the way, and an hour after there were three handsome, jet-black horses, showing the best points for endurance and speed, sent to the hotel stables, where Butterfly Billy had put up during his stay in Omaha.

The next day he was measured for his Rider's suits, and as before, had them made most gorgeous, of light-blue velvet jacket, white corduroy pants, scarlet jockey cap, and silk sash of the same hue, and altogether, with his handsome cavalry boots and spurs, and belt of arms, made a very picturesque and striking make-up.

"You have grown so, Butterfly, we will have to drop the *y* off your name and call you Butterfly Bill, I guess; but how they ever gave you the name of Billy, when you have no claim to it, is one of those things which no one can find out."

"Wild Bill, you remember, general, has not William for his Christian name, for it is James B. Hickok."

"True, and border nomenclature is past finding out; but where will you make your quarters at this end of the line?"

"At Rudolph's, sir."

"And go west how far?"

"To the mountains, if need be, sir, for I shall keep my seven black horses well scattered, and if I need others for a hard ride, I can get them at the stations."

"Certainly, for I shall give orders to let you have all the aid you may need; but when will you start?"

"To-morrow, sir, and when I have gone over the run and placed my blacks, I will be ready for orders, sir."

Some ten days after leaving Omaha, Butterfly

Bill returned to Rudolph's Station, having placed his horses and been over the line, and the men there all greeted him with cheer after cheer, so glad were they to have him on the Overland Trails once more.

But little did they dream what was behind his coming, and that under the guise of a Pony Rider he was doing the work of a mounted detective.

The next day dispatches came by courier addressed to "Col. Carter, Fort M—," and they were marked to go through by "Butterfly Bill, the Black Horse Rider."

Ten minutes after receiving them, Butterfly Bill was on the road for Fort M—.

CHAPTER IX.

TO THE RESCUE.

EVERY foot of the Overland Trail over which he was to ride was known to Butterfly Bill, for he had studied it well when Government courier something over a year before.

He had started upon his duties with a determination to hunt down the Giant General.

He did not wish to kill him, for he felt that the man could give him information he longed to know.

Once he could make him his prisoner, he would see to it that he made a clear confession of all that he knew under penalty of death, and he would keep him in durance vile until the truth of what he said could be proven.

From Rudolph's Station the youth had written to Major Mabrey, telling him that he had found what Yankee Kit had told him about the woman in the grave not being his mother to be true; and that the Giant General was again a robber on the Overland.

But he told the major to still hold Yankee Kit a prisoner until he could find out if there was not a chance to make him more useful.

In ending his letter, he had said:

"I believe that the Giant General's silent partner is Captain Coyote, and once I have either of those men in my power, I will force from them the secret of where my mother is, if alive."

"I am on the trail now as a mounted detective, and my time is to be devoted wholly to tracking the Giant General and the Mounted Miners."

"Thus far I have not been to Fort M—, but hope to get there before very long."

Hardly had the letter been written before orders came for him to go to Fort M— as dispatch-bearer, and it certainly was a pleasing command to the youth, who was anxious to again see the lovely face of Mattie Carter, and also Ivy Allen, who also held a very warm place in his heart.

Then, too, he wanted to see Buffalo Bill, whose protegee he considered himself.

The Overland Trail did not go by Fort M—, the nearest station on it being thirty miles distant.

To reach the fort, the Black Horse Rider turned off the main trail at a point some sixty miles from the garrison, and, as he was flying along on his black steed, which he found to be a magnificent animal, he suddenly drew rein, for a sound had reached his ears strangely like firing.

He listened attentively, and found that it was firing, and more, it was almost ahead of him, but yet miles away.

On he sped until he knew that those he heard firing were not half a mile distant.

Turning off from his course, he ascended a hill, leaving his horse to rest, and discovered a mile away a small clump of timber out upon the plain.

It was not over half an acre in size, and situated upon a hill was fortunately a good point to defend.

And so the score or more in the motte discovered, for they were standing off a force of over a hundred Indians, who completely surrounded them.

One glance was necessary for the young rider, for he took in the situation immediately and then marked the nature of the surrounding ground.

He saw that a force could come from two separate directions and attacking the Indians could drive them back upon the ridge where another force could head them off.

With this view in his mind the Black Horse Rider fairly flew down the hill, bounded upon his horse and went off at full speed.

It was a ride of thirty miles to the fort, and over a rough country; but away he went, springing from his saddle when reaching rugged ground and steep hills and running along by the side of his horse.

This helped the hard driven animal greatly, and so on the rider sped, sparing neither his steed or himself, until at last the fort came in sight.

The noble black was staggering and yet held on, for the youth would not be merciful to a beast when human life was at stake.

Across the prairie the sentinel saw the red cap and blue jacket flashing in the sunlight and made the report.

Many came to look and see the flying Pony Rider.

On, on he came until a large number of soldiers off duty had gathered about the stockade gate through which he must enter.

At first it was believed that red-skins were in chase, for he was seen to be urging his horse to greater speed.

On he came until at length the horse dashed up to the gate, which was thrown open and as he passed into the fort a soldier cried in a voice heard by all:

"It is Butterfly Billy!"

The name was repeated in a chorus of a hundred voices and then followed three rousing cheers for Butterfly Billy.

As he threw himself from his horse the poor, panting animal could hardly stand, and touching his cap the Rider said quickly:

"Dispatches, sir, for Colonel Carter and news of importance also."

"Can I see him at once?"

"You can, my brave fellow—follow me," said the officer of the day who was a new officer at the fort and did not know the youth, but had heard of Butterfly Billy and his deeds of daring, so gazed with admiration upon his handsome face, flushed with pride at the reception the soldiers had given him.

At the door of his quarters stood Colonel Carter, a handsome man of forty-eight, who had come out to see the cause of the cheering, and ere the officer could speak he recognized the young Rider.

"Butterfly Billy, is it really you?" and he seized the hand of the youth, who quickly handed over his bunch of dispatches and said:

"Yes, Colonel Carter, I am back on the old trails again, sir; but I wish to report that thirty miles from here in Willow Motte there is a party of soldiers, with wagons, corraled by a large band of Indians who have them surrounded and must number fully a hundred."

"The weakness of the fire, sir, caused me to think the party was a small one and I rode hard to report, and I took in the surroundings so that if you let me guide a force to the relief I can completely cut the red-skins off."

"Bravo, my boy, you are the same hero as of old, and the force corraled is none other than a supply train under guidance of your old pard, Buffalo Bill, for we have been expecting them for a couple of days past and wondered at the delay."

"Orderly, request Captain Allen to come to my quarters at once, and say to him to order his men and Captain Rosafy's troop ready to march at once with three days rations."

The orderly departed upon his errand, and Colonel Carter bade Butterfly Billy follow him into the office, while he examined his dispatches, and said:

"I am glad to see you on the trail again, my young hero, for there is work for you to do; but do you feel able to return with this relief party?"

"Oh, yes, sir, though my horse is used up, dead beat in fact; but I can guide them the nearest way, sir, and my idea is to divide the force in three squads, coming upon the red-skins from two quarters that will drive them into a valley, their only means of retreat, where the third force will have made their way to head them off, thus hemming them in; but pardon my suggestion, sir."

"I will tell Captain Allen to adopt your plan, Butterfly; but how many red-skins do you think are there?"

"Over a hundred, sir."

"Then I shall send three troops, in all about a hundred men and make a clean sweep of it," and the colonel sent another order to that effect.

Captain Allen just then came in, and he, too, warmly greeted the Pony Rider, and receiving his orders to start at once with his command and that Butterfly Billy would tell him what to do, he said that he was ready to go on the instant, and Colonel Carter ordered a horse from his own stable for the young guide.

Half an hour after Butterfly Billy's arrival at the fort, he was riding by the side of Captain Allen at the head of four-score gallant troopers going to the relief of the supply train.

CHAPTER X.

THE PONY RIDER'S PLOT.

CAPTAIN ALLEN was an old soldier, and a good one; but he was not too proud to take a suggestion from a mere boy, and one who he knew was not given to going wrong in his ideas.

So he listened to just what the Pony Rider had to say, as they rode along, and decided to carry out his plans in the rescue of the supply train.

"Of course it will be easy enough, Rosafy," he said, addressing Captain Rosafy of I Company, "to rescue the train; but, as my young friend here suggests, it will be far better to completely wipe out the Sioux, and I shall take his advice and divide my force when we camp to-night."

"I agree with you, Captain Allen, and certainly Butterfly Billy has won by his deeds recognition of any advice he has to offer, and it will be a great thing if we can give the Sioux a lesson for them to long remember," answered Captain Rosafy, while Lieutenant Barden, commanding E Troop, remarked:

"I did not believe there was a red-skin on the war-path within a hundred miles of the fort."

"It is because Buffalo Bill went East a month ago to bring the supply train out, for they knew that he had gone without a doubt, and at once became bold and made this raid," Captain Allen returned, and he added:

"But for you, Butterfly Billy, the supply-train would have been captured."

"I only hope that we will be in time," said the youth, in a tone so significant that Captain Allen gave the order at once for the pace to be quickened.

Night soon after set in, but still the guide did not falter, but held on his way unerringly.

At last, after hours of riding through the darkness, he told Captain Allen that it was well to call a halt for rest, and the troopers were halted upon the banks of a stream, and in the edge of some timber.

Butterfly Billy then, as soon as all had their supper, explained to the three officers exactly the situation.

"If Captain Rosafy, with his company, follows up this stream, Captain Allen, he will arrive about daylight in the valley through which the Sioux will have to retreat, and can hide in the timber and ambush them, while you and Lieutenant Barden can press on to a stream about five miles from here, and there divide so as to pass on each side of the motte where the Sioux have the supply-train concealed—Hark! do you hear that firing?"

All heard a few shots far in the distance, and the men could hardly refrain from cheering, for it told them that the supply-train still held out.

"When you get into a position to charge, you can sweep the Indians before you and rush them into the valley upon Captain Rosafy, so perhaps it would be as well to let him have a few extra men, for if they prove too strong for you, and you cannot drive them, then he can tell it by the firing, and come to your rescue; for the red-skins may have received reinforcements, though I doubt it."

"Butterfly Billy, you are a soldier, every inch of you, and I shall carry out your plans *verbatim*, and the victory is yours when won, for we will not think of failure," said Captain Allen with enthusiasm.

After three-quarters of an hour's rest the horses were resaddled, watered, and the troopers mounted to continue on their way.

It was a sad, silent parting as Captain Rosafy moved away up the stream with his men, for all felt that some were parting to meet no more.

Then, in parallel lines the companies of Captains Allen and Barden moved forward, the young guide in advance.

They went at a canter for several miles, and then came down to a walk.

All the trappings of the soldiers were wrapped to prevent jingling, and when they halted at a stream, not over a mile from the corraled supply train, the scattering fire of the rifles of the defenders could be distinctly heard, showing that they were expecting a surprise and wished to let their red foes know that they were not to be caught napping.

From the sound of the firing, the position of the train was taken, and the two troops divided, Butterfly Billy going with Captain Allen.

It was agreed that if they got into position without being seen, a revolver rapidly fired three times should be the signal of attack; but if discovered by the red-skins, both troops should at once charge, and drive the enemy toward the valley, where Captain Rosafy lay in wait for them.

It was nearing dawn, and the darkness had

become intense, for the skies were overcast with dark clouds that threatened rain.

Suddenly through the darkness rung out a burst of demoniacal yells and the tramp of hoofs in a mad rush.

The soldiers knew well what it meant—that the red-skins were charging the train from all quarters, to carry it by storm.

Flashes of flame burst forth from the dark timber where the train was encamped, and cheers greeted the wild yells of the red-skins.

"Now is our time! Forward march—charge!" and the words rung out loud from the lips of Captain Allen, and with a rousing cheer the troopers charged.

Their cheer was answered from a point half a mile away upon the prairie, and it told them that Captain Barden and his troop were also rushing on to the rescue of the train, and following these cheers came a response from the besieged train people, answered by yells of fury from the now surprised red-skins.

Thus far Butterfly Billy's plan had worked to a charm.

CHAPTER XI.

A MYSTERY.

As Butterfly Billy had feared, the Indians had been reinforced by another band, and it was the coming of this force that had decided them upon carrying the timber by storm, in one grand rush from all quarters.

The trainmen had proven themselves thorough fighters and true marksmen, and they had been certainly well commanded, for at every point they had beaten off their foes.

But with scarcely more than two dozen fighting men, in spite of their good position and the barrier of wagons, slain horses and earth thrown up, not to speak of the shelter of the timber, they would have been overwhelmed.

Also, but for the suggestive remark of Butterfly Billy, that "he hoped they would arrive in time," which caused Captain Allen to quicken the pace, they would have gotten there too late, for ten minutes later would have seen the fight ended, as the rush of the Sioux could never have been withstood by that devoted band, brave as they were.

With Captain Allen's troop on one side, Lieutenant Barden and his men on the other, and the trainmen to also open upon them, the Indians were utterly demoralized and started in wild flight for the valley that would lead them into the mountains to safety.

There were a dozen men who ran out of the timber, seized riderless Indian ponies and swept on in pursuit.

The two troops soon oblied toward the center, where the men from the train a dozen in number, with Buffalo Bill at their head were in hot pursuit.

Dawn was just breaking, and in the gray light the flying Indians and their pursuers looked like phantoms.

The carbines of the troops were firing merrily, and the red-skins were returning the fire as they ran, and both sides were suffering.

"Bravo, Captain Allen, you saved us all, sir," cried Buffalo Bill, as, mounted upon a chief's horse he dashed up to Captain Allen, who responded:

"I am delighted that we did, Cody, but the praise is not for me, as your old *protege*, Butterfly Billy is back again, and on his way to the fort he saw your danger and rode full speed for the fort and warned the colonel, while he also planned the attack."

"Hurrah for Butterfly Billy! back again you say, sir; but where is he?"

"On ahead somewhere, I guess, for I could not restrain him once the fight had opened."

"I hope that he has not met with harm; but ah! if we only had a force ahead to fire on these red-skins."

"Which we have, for Captain Rosafy and thirty-eight men are in the valley yonder! and this too at the suggestion of Butterfly Billy."

"Ah, he's a great boy, Captain Allen; but do you know that the red-skins number two hundred warriors?"

"I supposed not so many."

"Yes, sir, they were reinforced last night, and have fully that number."

"Had, rather, for they have lost a score in the fight thus far, I am sure."

"True, sir, but they are hemmed in now, and if Captain Rosafy leaves his position to charge them, I fear that he and his small force will be overwhelmed."

"My God, Cody, you are right, and I am sorry that I did not give Rosafy more men, for our surprising the Sioux was a great thing in our favor."

"I only hope, sir, that he will stand his ground, and if the red-skins cannot break his line he and his men are safe," replied Cody.

The two had been riding side by side as they talked together, and the scout's dozen men were between the two troops of cavalry and following their leader.

The entrance to the valley was near, and the red-skins were rushing pell-mell into it, while their pursuers crowded close at their heels.

"Who commanded the supply train, Cody?" asked Captain Allen, after awhile.

"Lieutenant Nye was in command, sir, but he was killed, and so I took charge."

"I thought so, and kept the Sioux at bay as you know how to do so well, Cody."

"I congratulate you; but poor Nye, he was a brave fellow."

"Yes, sir, and half a dozen brave fellows went with him, while two-thirds of the trainmen were more or less severely wounded, and, but for your coming we would all now be dead. But see, the Sioux are in the valley."

As Buffalo Bill spoke, in the early dawn, the mass of charging warriors dashed into the valley.

"Where is Rosafy?" gasped Captain Allen, who had begun to dread the ordeal through which that gallant officer and his men had to pass.

But, even as he spoke the dark entrance to the valley was lighted up by a line of flame, and the carbines of the troopers in ambush poured in a deadly storm of lead upon the Sioux now so near them.

The Indians recoiled, and then rushed to and fro like the waves of the sea dashing against a rocky shore.

The sides of the valley were steep, and the entrance narrow, and the timber held a deadly foe.

Then behind them came other foes equally as deadly, and for a moment the red-skins wavered, surged, and then with one wild burst of yells charged on into the valley to gain the mountains beyond where their safety lay.

The troopers had reloaded their carbines and another volley met them; but though staggered, they moved on with a mighty rush, returning the fire, and meeting the rapid rattling shots of the revolvers.

"Thank Heaven Louis Rosafy stands firm," cried Captain Allen, and his men were urged on to greater speed to hurl themselves upon the rear of the flying Sioux.

Buffalo Bill and his dozen trainmen, and Lieutenant Will Barden with his troop were also driving spurs deep to catch the Indians in the trap; but all saw that it was well for Captain Rosafy that he had held his position in the timber and had not charged forth to check the panic-stricken Sioux, for in that case his men would have been ridden down and slain, for a regiment could not have headed off the warriors in their mad flight for life.

On they swept, and after them wheeled Captain Rosafy and his men, and the hot pursuit was kept up until the leading Indians reached the highlands and stood at bay.

Then the troopers, knowing their own weakness, and that the Sioux could swell their numbers in a short while, retreated slowly down the valley, gathering up the trappings and horses, caring for the wounded and burying the dead.

Thus they retreated to the timber where the train awaited them, a train of thirty wagons rich in supplies for the fort, and there awaited the coming of Captain Rosafy and his men.

They came soon, and Butterfly Billy was not with them.

But he had been seen riding along in the midst of the Indians.

What it meant even Buffalo Bill could not comprehend, for all who saw him were sure that he was not a prisoner, and rode by the side of the chief.

CHAPTER XII.

UNDER A CLOUD.

THE camp of the troopers at the timber, which had been made the stronghold of the train, was for all of that day and the next, as there was much to be done.

The train had lost most heavily in horses, for there was not an animal that had not been more or less severely wounded, while two-thirds had been killed by the shots of the Indians.

This left the train without the means of going on to the fort.

Buffalo Bill had reported that the Sioux had come up from the rear, following rapidly upon their trail, and that fortunately he had been scouting around, and seeing signs of red-skins had been on the watch.

Afar off, from a hill, he had seen the large

force of Indians, and that they were following their trail, so he had ridden with all speed and given the warning.

Rapidly the thirty wagons had pressed on, going at a pace that threatened to end in destruction; but where they were was an open prairie, with no tree or shelter near, and it was miles to the nearest place where a halt could be made, and with any hope of a successful defense.

He would have ridden on to the fort and given the warning, but he was the only one who knew the way, and Lieutenant Nye refused to allow him to depart.

At last the clump of timber was reached, and there they found a shelter, with, however, no water for themselves and stock.

Small trees were hastily felled, the wagons placed in a circle, earth thrown up to make a breastwork, and before they had completed their limited means of defense the Sioux appeared in sight, a hundred in number.

Up to the timber they dashed in a charge, and the scout said that he was sure that their leader was a white man, but this only himself and Lieutenant Nye had noticed.

Though beaten off, the fire of the Indians had killed a number of their horses and wounded others, for the animals could not be sheltered well.

Then the red-skins surrounded them and began a siege, charging them time and again.

Their lieutenant, a gallant officer, fell early in the fight, others followed, and a number received slight wounds, while they suffered terribly for water.

But Buffalo Bill knew what he was about, and the Indians were worsted after every charge.

They knew not that help was near, and expected none, other than that the firing might be heard by some scouting or hunting party, and bring relief.

For this reason the scout had kept up a constant firing day and night, for ammunition was plenty, as two of the wagons contained supplies for the magazine.

Then came at dark, the night before, the other band of Sioux, and Buffalo Bill knew that the dawn would usher in a charge of the combined forces that must prove successful.

Yet he did not despair, and his light-hearted manner and splendid pluck cheered his comrades, a number of whom were wholly unused to border warfare, and were unnerved by the wild yells of the savages.

When the final charge came, Buffalo Bill and his men stood ready to meet it.

He had heard what the red-skins had not noticed, and that was a sound like many hoofs, and he knew help was near, or that more foes were coming.

Hardly had the rush begun when the cheers of the troopers from two quarters rent the air, and the Sioux, on the very verge of success, were shot down, beaten off and put to flight.

Calling to a few of his men to follow him, he had captured some riderless Indian ponies and joined in the charge.

Such was the story told by the scout, and the appearance of the train proved that the attack and defense had been desperate in the extreme.

When the wounded were looked to, and *travois* cut for carrying them back to the fort, the dead were buried, and it was seen that both pale-faces and red-skins had suffered severely, the latter, however, in a far greater degree.

The wagons were gotten out from the temporary breastworks, and horses of the troopers pressed into service in place of the slain animals, for Indian ponies had been captured by scores.

The next morning the train pulled out for the fort, whither Lieutenant Will Barden had gone the evening before with a squad of men to report the affair to Colonel Carter.

It was an all day travel to the fort, but the victors were royally saluted when they drew near, and wounded soldiers had their hearts gladdened by this tribute to their courage.

When Lieutenant Barden entered the colonel's quarters, his daughter, pretty Mattie Carter, a maiden of sixteen, was with him and heard the report of the young officer.

"It was a complete victory, Mr. Barden, as you report it, and I congratulate you and your command upon it, while the Sioux will be taught a lesson they will long remember.

But the supply train was a most valuable one, and Cody shall be most honorably mentioned for his gallant defense; but you say that the scout is sure that the red-skins were led by a white man?"

"So he says, sir, and he spoke to Lieutenant Nye about the fact, attracting his attention to the man, he says."

"Some contemptible renegade, whom I would like much to capture and make an example of."

"But the renegade was not killed or wounded?"

"No, sir, for Captain Rosafy was the last to see him, and he said that he was riding away with the Pony Express Rider dashing along by his side."

"A prisoner?"

"We all thought not, sir, and that is the strangest part of it."

"How strange, Mr. Borden?"

"Well, sir, the plan carried out in the attack by Captain Allen was that of Butterfly Billy, as the Pony Rider is called, and yet, after the arrangements were made he was not seen again by any one, until observed riding along in the middle of the Sioux, and afterward alongside of the chief whom Cody said was a white man, as though they were friends."

"If that means that Butterfly Billy is a renegade also, Lieutenant Barden, it is as false a charge as ever was placed on the head of an innocent man!"

Sharp, terse, and with an angry ring the words were uttered, and from the lips of Mattie Carter, who had been stung by the insinuation into defending her hero—the one who, before the eyes of hundreds, a year and a half before, had saved her from a fearful death at the risk of his own.

"Yes, Barden, I cannot believe that this means aught against Butterfly Billy, but rather that he has been captured by the Sioux, and will be put to death unless we can save him."

"I made no charge, Colonel Carter, for I honor the gallant youth; but I merely told you how it appeared to all who saw him in the midst of the Sioux."

"If he is a prisoner, then Heaven have pity upon him, at the mercy of that mad band of savages!"

"Father!" And Mattie Carter sprung to her feet.

"Yes, my child."

"The Pony Rider must be saved!"

"My child, were we dealing with a civilized people it might be done; but with red-skins it will be no easy task, for I have not half the force I would need to attack the Sioux in their stronghold," was the reply, and without a word Mattie Carter arose and left the room.

Late that evening the train and its escort arrived at the fort, and among those who watched their coming two were most deeply interested lookers-on.

CHAPTER XIII.

A FAIR PLOTTER.

THE young girl who had so sharply spoken in the defense of Butterfly Billy, upon leaving her father's office, at once wended her way to the pretty quarters of Captain Allen, the senior captain of the gallant—th Cavalry.

Seated upon the piazza, anxiously awaiting news from the field, was Ivy Allen, the captain's beautiful daughter, a maiden of nineteen, and who had justly won the title of the Belle of the Border.

She arose as Mattie Carter entered the little yard, and said anxiously:

"I am so glad you have come, Mattie, for I saw Lieutenant Barden return with half a dozen men, and am dreading bad news."

"Don't worry about your father, Ivy, for he is all right, and won a great victory, too, so will be on, with the train they rescued, late this afternoon."

"I am so glad of this; but your face shows that there is cause for sorrow on some one's account—Captain Rosafy is not—"

"No, he was not hurt; but Lieutenant Nye, who was in command of the train, was killed."

"Poor fellow."

"Yes, isn't it sad? but then it is a soldier's fate, you know."

"Buffalo Bill then took command and beat the Sioux off, though they were ten to one against them, until the troopers arrived."

"Brave Buffalo Bill! it is just like the noble fellow."

"Yes, and they suffered greatly, for all the horses but twelve were killed, and these were wounded, and but for the arrival of the troopers all the brave men would have been slain."

"I am so glad that father and his men arrived in time."

"Yes, in the very nick of time, and Lieutenant Barden said that your father sent word that all the credit was due to Butterfly Billy, who brought word of the train's danger and guiding the relief party planned the attack."

"Splendid boy! he will yet be a gallant army officer for all he has done."

"Ivy, Butterfly Billy is not such a boy as he was."

"Indeed! and when did you discover this fact?" asked Ivy Allen, with a smile, that brought a blush to Mattie's face.

"I saw him ride in when he gave the alarm, for I looked through the blinds of my window, and he is so manly grown, and oh! so handsome."

"Yes, I don't doubt that, Mattie, and I admire your young hero immensely."

"Your young hero, you mean, for did you not, at the risk of your life the day the Indians killed his horse and were rushing upon him, ride toward him, take him up behind you and save his life?"

"Oh, no, Miss Ivy Allen, he is *your* hero."

"Well, I don't deny it, but he is yours, too, for he is just about my age, and some four years your senior, Miss Mattie Carter," and Ivy laughed.

"But, Ivy," said Mattie, seriously, "I came to have a talk with you about Butterfly Billy."

"You do not mean that harm has befallen him, Mattie?"

"He is a prisoner to the Sioux."

"God have mercy upon him!"

"Oh, Ivy! he must not die, he must not die!" and Mattie's eyes filled with tears.

"Tell me of it, Mattie."

"He told your father, so Lieutenant Barden says, just what to do to surprise the Sioux, and his plan was followed to the letter."

"The Indians charged the train just as the troopers came up, and from that minute Butterfly Billy was not seen with the soldiers."

"Captain Rosafy had taken up a position in a valley to ambush the Sioux when they retreated, and he and his men saw Butterfly Billy riding in the midst of the Indians."

"A prisoner?"

"That is what bothers them all, for they say he was not a prisoner, and Captain Rosafy saw him ride up to the side of the chief and the two dashed on together as though they were friends."

"This is strange, indeed."

"Yes, Ivy, and Buffalo Bill says that the chief is a *white man*."

"Ah! a renegade?"

"Yes."

"I cannot understand it all."

"Nor I, but I flew up at the insinuation that Butterfly Billy was also a renegade."

"I do not blame you, if Lieutenant Barden meant to say that he was."

"He says that he did not mean that he was, only the fact of Butterfly Billy being with the Sioux and not a prisoner was most mysterious."

"And so it is; but I cannot believe aught against the young man, in spite of the mystery hanging over him."

"He is a mystery, Ivy, for I never knew even his real name, for he as much as told father when he was Government messenger on the Overland, that he was entered on the books of the company under a name that was not his own."

"Where has he been all this time, Mattie?"

"No one knows."

"But he has come back to the fort again?"

"Yes, and told father he was to ride Express again."

"He is certainly a mystery, but I will not believe harm of him until I have the best of proof."

"Nor I, Ivy, and I am so glad to hear you say so; but what is to be done to save him?"

"Ah, Mattie, that is a question your father must answer."

"But he says his force is not half large enough to attack the Sioux village, and of course they will not hear of a flag of truce."

"Then we can only put hope in one thing, Mattie, as far as I can see."

"What is that hope, Ivy?"

"In the young Pony Rider himself."

"Oh, what can he do, a prisoner in the midst of a thousand warriors, for of course they will take him to their village and torture him to death?"

"Butterfly Billy has had many hair-breadth escapes, and I have hope in his powers and courage to extricate himself even from the hands of the Sioux, so cheer up, Mattie."

"You give me hope, dear Ivy; but then he saved my life, and—and—I can never forget him," and the tears again dimmed the beautiful eyes of the young girl.

In the afternoon when the train with its escort arrived, Mattie again sought Ivy Allen, and said eagerly:

"Ah, Ivy, there is hope."

"My father has just told me all, Mattie, and

he believes Butterfly Billy as true as steel; but he says there is not a ray of hope for him in the maddened humor of the Sioux after their defeat, so all that can be done is to rely upon the brave youth himself, and this, too, seems to be clinging to a straw.

"Poor fellow!"

"Well, I say that there is hope, Ivy, for I have a plan to save him."

"You, Mattie?" and Ivy Allen opened her beautiful eyes in wonder.

"Oh, yes, little one, and I'll tell you my plot and see what you think of it; but will you let me send your father's orderly to ask Buffalo Bill to come here?"

"Certainly," and the orderly was called and sent after the scout, while Mattie divulged her plot to Ivy Allen, for the rescue of Butterfly Billy.

CHAPTER XIV.

A TRIO OF FRIENDS.

THE orderly sent after the scout soon found him, and when Buffalo Bill heard that the summons came from Miss Mattie Carter, to go to Captain Allen's quarters, he was considerably surprised; but with the vanity natural to a much-admired man who is to meet ladies, he fixed himself up for his visit.

When he presented himself at the captain's home, the scout looked his very best, and little like a man who the past few days had been fighting for life against fearful odds.

Though not a commissioned officer, Buffalo Bill received the courtesy due one, and as chief of scouts was treated by all with consideration.

Then, too, his brilliant career had caused him to be admired by all and to win many friends.

A dashing man in every sense of the word, handsome, an athlete, and utterly devoid of fear, he won all with whom he came in contact, while his intelligence, noble heart and wit, combined with a light-hearted devil-I-care manner, caused him to be a general favorite and the idol of hero-worshippers.

Dressed in his picturesque border costume, and with his broad sombrero in hand, Buffalo Bill entered the parlor of Captain Allen, and Ivy Allen and Mattie Carter arose to greet him.

"Permit me to congratulate you, Mr. Cody, upon your escape, and the laurels you have won in your defense of the train," said Ivy Allen, pleasantly.

"And accept my congratulations, too, Mr. Cody," Mattie Carter added.

"You are both very kind, young ladies, and I appreciate your goodness to me, as also the honor of knowing that you had sent for me."

This was a slight hint to know why he had been sent for, and Ivy Allen responded:

"Yes, sit down, Mr. Cody, for we wish to have a talk with you."

The scout seated himself and remarked pleasantly:

"I suppose you wish to hear of my young protegee, the Pony Rider?"

Both maidens gave him credit for hitting very near the mark at a first shot, and Mattie blushed, but said promptly:

"Yes, I do wish to know about Butterfly Billy, because he saved my life, and Miss Allen is also anxious to hear of the one whose life she saved."

"Under other circumstances I would have waited to hear all that had happened; but it is hinted that Butterfly Billy is a traitor, and was seen with the red-skins in full flight, and was not a prisoner, so we wish to hear your opinion."

"Butterfly Billy is no more a traitor than you are, Miss Mattie," was the prompt reply.

Then the scout continued:

"There is a mystery about the boy I admit, and no one seems to have solved it; but look at his record as a Pony Rider, and see if such a man could go wrong."

"He left here over a year ago as mysteriously as he came, and now, without warning, again turns up as an Overland Rider."

"He came to the fort as a bearer of dispatches, heard firing while on the way, investigated it, took in the situation and acted as a guide to Captain Allen and his relief corps."

"Did you see him, Mr. Cody?" asked Ivy Allen.

"Yes, on the field?" Mattie added.

"Yes, I saw him in the early dawn, when the Sioux were in full flight."

"Before they entered the ambush of Captain Rosafy?"

"Yes, Miss Mattie, and he was then in the midst of the Indians."

"A prisoner?"

"He did not appear to be, I admit."

"Did you see him after passing the ambush?"

"I did, ahead, by the side of the chief, whom I took to be a white man."

"Others did not think so."

"True, but I am perhaps more familiar with the ways of Indians than they are, and I'll wager my scalp-lock the chief was a pale-face beneath his red paint."

"And Butterfly Billy was with him?"

"Yes, Miss Ivy."

"If he is a prisoner they will kill him?"

"I regret to say that they will."

"Torture him to death?" and Mattie Carter spoke anxiously.

"Yes."

"Then he cannot be saved?"

Buffalo Bill shook his head and replied:

"It will be no easy task; but I had decided to make the attempt to save him."

"Father says his force cannot do it."

"Strategy can often do what strength is powerless to perform."

"But will it not be too late, Mr. Cody?"

"No, Miss Ivy, not to make the attempt, for they will take him to their village and pass a few days in mourning for their dead, and then seek revenge upon him."

"How would you go about it, Mr. Cody?" asked Mattie.

"Alone, or perhaps with one of my best men, and having a company of cavalry in a retreat to fall back on."

"The risk you run will be very great, Mr. Cody."

"Yes, but the youth saved my life, along with the lives of all with the train, and he would face death I know to do it again."

"Mr. Cody," suddenly said Mattie, with an abruptness that startled both, "I have an idea."

"Give us the benefit of it, Miss Mattie," said the scout with a smile.

"You took some prisoners in the fight?"

"Yes, some wounded warriors, and a sub-chief."

"How many?"

"Thirteen."

"Will they die?"

"No, I think hardly any of them are seriously wounded."

"Why would it not be a good thing to go to the Sioux village and offer those men in exchange for Butterfly Billy?"

"Miss Mattie, you have a soldier's head on your shoulders, for you propose the very thing to do, and I never thought of it, nor do I believe any one else in the fort."

"But how will you get to the Sioux village, Mr. Cody, for the Indians would rather have your scalp than capture Fort M—I verily believe," Ivy Allen remarked.

"I will find a way, Miss Ivy."

"When will you start?"

"I will see Colonel Carter and get his permission to make the exchange, and then depart to-night."

"But what a fearful risk you will run," Mattie said anxiously.

"Ah, Miss Mattie, duty demands the risk every day of my life, and I certainly would give much to save that noble boy."

"We three are his friends, and such a trio ought to win, and we will."

"I will at once see Colonel Carter."

"And if Carter refuses, just come back for Miss Allen and I, and we'll force him to strike his colors," and the scout left the two maidens with every hope from them for his success.

CHAPTER XV.

BUFFALO BILL'S MISSION.

SEATED in the window of the Allen home, Ivy and her pretty friend Mattie watched the tall form of Buffalo Bill as he wended his way to headquarters.

They saw the sentinel admit him, and then half an hour passed and darkness was creeping over the scene when he reappeared.

Would Colonel Carter refuse, and the scout have to come and seek their aid as pleaders?

No, he did not come toward the Allen quarters, but walked away toward his own cabin.

Putting on their wraps, the two maidens began to walk up and down near the stockade gate, for the scout had said that he would go at once.

They wished to see him as he passed out and to wish him again God speed in his perilous mission.

He was going to save Butterfly Billy's life at the risk of his own.

Then, after waiting half an hour, a form appeared, coming toward them.

"Why, Ivy, and you, Miss Mattie, what are you doing here?"

It was Captain Allen, and he was going to his quarters.

"Papa, we have enlisted Buffalo Bill in the perilous work of attempting to save the life of the Pony Rider, Butterfly Billy, and we were waiting to see him start and wish him good luck," frankly said Ivy Allen, who never hid anything from her father.

"Ah! that is it, is it?"

"I see now why Cody was so determined, for I just came from his quarters, where I went to urge him not to make so foolhardy an attempt."

"Colonel Carter told me of his determination to go to the Sioux village and seek to exchange the wounded braves we have for Butterfly Billy, and he urged strongly against it, for Cody is worth a regiment, and is no man to lose."

"But the colonel granted his request as he was so eager to go, and then asked me to go and urge Bill against it, and I did so."

"With what result, papa?"

"He will start within the hour, so come back home to supper, and I will send my orderly to have him stop by on his way, and we will again talk it over."

"You think it a foolhardy thing to attempt, Captain Allen?" asked Mattie.

"Yes, I do think so; but then I have the utmost confidence in Cody."

"And what do you think of Butterfly Billy not having gone with the Sioux as their prisoner?"

"That he is playing some game that we do not see through; that is all there is to it."

"I told you so," cried Mattie exultantly at this, and she could have kissed the handsome old soldier then and there, but she did not, doubtless greatly to the regret of the captain, had he known her half-formed intention.

Mattie went home to tea with Captain Allen and Ivy, and an orderly was sent to Colonel Carter to come over and join them, which he did.

As they arose from the table the scout was announced, and entered the parlor in his full attire for the trail.

He looked every inch a scout, and as they gazed into his fearless, resolute face, and recalled the remarkable career of the man, they knew that he was the one to make the bold attempt that he was starting upon.

"Well, Cody, you are determined to go, I see?" said Colonel Carter, gazing upon his chief of scouts with considerable admiration.

"Yes, sir, and I wished to say, Colonel Carter, that if the company start any time in the morning it will be time enough, and Texas Jack will guide them to the retreat that I spoke of, and where I can go if pursued, or am in need of aid."

"All right, I will have Captain Rosafy go with his men, and carry a week's rations, as you may be delayed longer than you think."

"We desired you to come to-night, to wish you good fortune, and say that we hope to see you back again soon with that handsome young Pony Rider accompanying you."

"I hope so, sir," and shaking hands good-by with the Colonel, Captain and two maidens, Buffalo Bill left the house, mounted his waiting horse and rode away in the darkness, followed by silent prayers that came from Mattie Carter's inmost heart.

"Luck to you, Cody," said the officer of the day as the scout rode by him, and the sentinel at the gate said with a rich brogue, for all knew his dangerous mission:

"I'll be after giving yez a presint arms, Misther Buffalo Bill, to show yez my good wishes."

Buffalo Bill laughed and returned the salute, and heading out over the trackless prairie, started upon his mission of rescue.

The scout was too well accustomed to midnight rides alone, over prairie and mountains, to have any dread of danger.

His horse was one who knew his master as well as the master did the horse, and was thoroughly trained, while his speed had given him fame wherever he was known.

Thoroughly equipped for a jaunt of days, with his trusty repeating-rifle and revolvers, he felt equal to any ordinary danger and hardship he would have to encounter.

He passed along over the trail to the timber, where he had made the gallant defense with the train, and his horse shied from the group of new-made graves as though he saw there the spirits of the dead.

On through the valley, where Captain Rosafy had ambushed the flying red-skins, and thence on into a mountain canyon where he knew he

would find a resting-place, with water and grass in plenty.

It was an hour to dawn when he at last halted, and staking out his horse he wrapped himself in his blankets and laid down for a few hours' rest and slumber.

How long he slept he did not know, but he was awakened with a start by the sound of a human voice, and he heard the sternly uttered words:

"You are my prisoner! Don't force me to kill you, so surrender!"

"My God! Butterfly Billy!" and Buffalo Bill sprang to his feet in the face of the threatening rifle.

CHAPTER XVI.

BUTTERFLY BILLY'S NERVE.

It will be remembered that when the Indians were heard to be charging upon the supply train at bay in the little clump of timber, Butterfly Billy was not seen by the soldiers until he was discerned riding in the midst of the flying Sioux.

An idea had struck the youth to ride on ahead and warn Captain Rosafy that the force was larger than they had supposed, and it would be best to stand at bay in ambush rather than to charge upon the Indians and thus scatter his men, who would be swept away by the panic-stricken avalanche of horses and humanity.

He was riding swiftly along when he suddenly discovered a ravine before him.

This he had to go around, and in the mean time the charge of the cavalry had surprised the red-skins, who started in full flight.

Hardly had he rounded the ravine when he beheld coming behind him the flying Indians.

His horse was fleet and he would have out-footed them, but in the gray light he saw that he was dashing upon a band of Indians who were holding horses and awaiting for the warriors who had crept up to the timber on foot.

To escape was impossible, and quick as a flash he decided upon his course.

He appeared, as he was going, to be also flying from the soldiers, and in his saddle holsters were a pair of handcuffs which he had with him for the Giant General's especial benefit.

These he slipped upon his wrists in a flash, and holding his hands above his head shouted in the Sioux tongue, which he had picked up in his former life on the Overland Trails:

"Help me! Save me! I am the friend of the Sioux braves!"

The red-skin guards could now see that he was not one of their braves, and they saw that he was a pale-face and flying from his own people, while his hands were held above his head.

So they sprang before his horse and checked the animal with a suddenness that would have thrown a less skillful rider from his saddle.

Then they saw that the youth was ironed, and they began to talk excitedly among themselves, when they beheld their warriors flying in mad haste before the cheering, charging troopers.

The dismounted braves they dared not wait for, and springing upon their own steeds, they started in flight, carrying the Pony Rider with them.

Behind them came their comrades in wild alarm, and with a number of the warriors who had been attacking the train on foot, mounted behind those who had not been dismounted.

Not far away, coming in an oblique line toward those in the midst of whom was Butterfly Billy, were the braves who had been attacking from the other side of the timber, and following them close was Lieutenant Barden and his men, while dashing out of the shadow of the timber were Buffalo Bill and his trainmen, who had hastily caught a number of fugitive ponies and mounted them.

Behind the red-skins immediately about him came Captain Allen and his troopers, and the fight had changed into a general flight.

All this the Pony Rider took in at a glance, as also that they were heading directly for the valley, and the fear came upon him that Captain Rosafy would charge the large force of flying red-skins and be swept to destruction.

Suddenly a ringing voice was heard, speaking in the Sioux tongue, and ordering the Indians to close up in a compact mass, and fire as they ran upon the pursuing troopers.

The voice of the man, commanding and different from the voices of the Sioux, bent the gaze of the Pony Rider at once upon him.

"That is a white man—now I am all right," muttered Butterfly Billy as he saw who the one was who had given the order.

Coming toward him at the head of the main mass of Indians, was a man in the full costume of a chief.

He was painted hideously, and his hair hung

loose, reaching to his waist; but it was a white face beneath a painted skin, Butterfly Billy was assured, and the hair was as wavy as a woman's, and of a brown hue.

He rode like one born in the saddle, yet had a different seat in the saddle from his braves about him, and his saddle and bridle were of civilized make, while his leggings were stuck in the tops of boots, he discarding moccasins.

The head-dress of feathers gayly covered was a gorgeous affair, and swept back over his shoulders, hanging upon one side of his horse down to his stirrup, and in a belt about his waist were several revolvers and a large bowie-knife.

This much Butterfly Billy took in at a glance, and he saw the eyes of the chief fixed upon him curiously.

His revolver was half raised, as though to shoot the Pony Rider, who quickly raised his hands and showed that they were in irons.

"Who are you?" came the stern query of the chief as he dashed alongside of the youth, and before an answer could be returned he continued:

"Come, ride along with me, sir!"

The man's speaking English but confirmed the idea of the youth that the chief of the Sioux was a renegade white man, and he spurred his horse alongside of him, grasping the rein in his manacled hands to check the speed of the animal and guide him.

"Now who are you?"

"A Pony Rider, and a fugitive, for I escaped from the soldiers."

"And why?"

"I was carrying too large a sum of money for my honesty, so hid it, was suspected and trying to escape was caught."

"Ah! that is it, is it?"

"Well, come with me and you are safe—Ha! we are ambushed!" and the words rung out in a tone of alarm as the soldiers under Captain Rosafy opened fire from the cedar thicket in the entrance to the valley.

It was good daylight now, and the fire was fatal to the men, piling up braves and ponies in wild confusion, and causing them to stagger, halt, half turn as though to fly, and then push on under the thundering command of their chief, given in the Sioux tongue:

"On, warriors, on! ride over the white wolves!"

With wild yells the Sioux rushed on once more, firing into the thicket, and again staggering under another volley from the carbines.

But neither the chief or Butterfly Billy were harmed, and in another instant they had passed the ambuscade and were dashing on up the valley.

Sioux braves and their ponies had fallen all around them, but those two men with white blood in their veins, and in the van, seemed to have charmed lives.

On, on, sped the renegade chief, with his braves following, many of them wounded and riding bleeding ponies.

The night had been a fearful one for them, and they left a couple of score of dead and dying behind them, while they had lost half a hundred horses captured and as many killed, and so wounded as to be useless.

It was a hunting party, and against the wishes of their chief they had followed the train, and another band had come to their aid.

In the moment of their success, they had met with a terrible defeat, and, not knowing the force of their foes, they were anxious to push on to safety in the hills, where no small number of soldiers dare follow them.

Grim and stern, angry at having been led by his horses to attack a train so near the fort, the renegade chief rode on, the Pony Rider still at his side.

At last the foot-hills were reached, and no other ambush had been run upon as the chief and his braves feared would be the case; and then the pace slackened down to a walk, and soon after a halt was called.

With great skill Butterfly observed the renegade chief dress the wounds of the horses, and when he took a leather case of instruments from his saddle pocket, he said:

"Are you not a doctor?"

"Yes, I was one."

"If my hands were only free I could help you."

"I can free you," and with a piece of wire taken from his case, he unlocked the manacles, and the youth set to work dressing the wounds of the braves, mentally making the remark:

"I must make myself solid with the red-skins for I am by no means in safe quarters, and if they take a fancy to my scalp, why they'll just have it, certain."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE WHITE BUFFALO.

WHEN the wounds of the warriors were dressed, and the ponies and red-skins had rested after their very hard ride, the chief gave the order to mount and move on once more, and the trail was followed on up into the mountains, where was located the Sioux village.

The scouts left in the rear had brought word that the troopers had retreated, after pursuing them to the foot-hills, and were following the trail back through the valley to the scene of the fight with the supply train.

It was late in the evening when, in the wildest pastures of the mountains the village fires were sighted, and a wail went up from hundreds when the news of the defeat ran through the camps.

The two hunting parties had returned empty handed, lost their game in their search for scalps, and many a warrior had been left dead upon the prairies.

The result was that the camp was at once a scene of mourning, and it was a fearful ordeal for Butterfly Billy to pass through, when they gathered around him with threatening gestures, believing him to be a prisoner.

But the renegade chief quickly explained that the young white brave was the foe to his people, and had escaped from death among them to seek a refuge with his red brothers the Sioux.

This altered the case with them, as to their treatment of the Pony Rider, and many greeted him as a white brother, for they fairly idolized their pale-face chief, who had been among them for several years and in many ways bettered their condition.

The young Pony Rider was invited to the tepee of the chief, to be his guest, and when they had supper together, prepared by a squaw who was the wife of the renegade, and the daughter of the great medicine-man of the tribe, Butterfly Billy was told that he would be expected to become an Indian at once.

"We will have a talk in the morning, young man, and on what is best to be done," said the renegade, whom Butterfly Billy now knew to be none other than White Buffalo, a chief whose name was a terror along the border, and yet whom no one seemed to have suspected before of being a white man.

"I'll see what White Buffalo has to say in the morning, and then I'll play my part to suit Butterfly Billy, for I am not wholly gone on the idea of being an Indian yet," mused the Pony Rider, as he curled himself up in his blankets and wooed slumber.

The renegade had instructed his Indian wife into his tastes in cooking, and so Butterfly Billy found no cause of complaint the next morning with the breakfast to which he and the chief sat down.

With coffee, corn hoe-cake, boiled antelope steaks and baked potatoes he thought he would at least not starve while a prisoner among the Sioux, for he looked upon himself as nothing else.

His nerve had served him well, when he dashed into the midst of the red-skins, and he did not doubt but that he would be able to extricate himself from the trap which he had voluntarily entered and then sprung.

He saw the village by daylight, and was surprised at the strength of the frontier.

He readily realized that it would take a brigade of soldiers to dislodge the Sioux from their position, and the fortification he saw thrown up at the weaker points of defense, revealed the master hand of the renegade white man.

The village was arranged in quarters, under sub-chiefs, with a grand council tepee in the center, and the house of the renegade was almost as conspicuous.

In the village that cut here and there into the mountains the cattle fed, with ponies by the thousand, and fenced-in patches of corn and vegetables, showed that the influence of the White Buffalo was felt in preparing good food for his people.

The guards over the cattle and ponies served as scouts to prevent a surprise, and Butterfly Billy realized that the Sioux could not readily be attacked, and certainly not defeated by any force that could be found at the limited numbered garrison to send against them.

After breakfast the chief mounted a fresh horse, and had one for the youth, and started with him on a round of his village and its surroundings.

Each outpost was visited, and having gone the rounds, like a good commander, White Buffalo returned to his quarters, and dismissed

the body-guard of half a hundred mounted braves who had followed him.

"Well, young man, what do you think of my camp?" he asked quietly, as they seated themselves under a tree near the chief's tepee.

"I think you have a situation that it would take an army to carry by storm, and you have arranged well against surprise."

"Yes, and I can bring into the field a thousand braves, old and young."

"Well, you need not fear the soldiers, as long as you keep near your own country."

"No! and I did not wish to attack the fort, knowing that it would bring the soldiers upon us, and their scouting parties would prevent our hunting for weeks; but the other chiefs urged, and having seen Buffalo Bill in the train were more anxious than ever to attack it, for the scalp of that scout is worth a fortune among the Sioux."

"It is lucky for me that you did attack it, chief."

"Yes, and I am glad now that we did, for it has convinced the Indians the more of my better judgment, and then I am glad to have rescued you."

"Thank you, sir, and I hope you will help me along in the new life that I must lead as a red-skin now."

"Oh, yes; but let me tell you that I do not anticipate dying an Indian by any means."

"I am not an old man, and I love life in the cities; but I have been unfortunate, for I wanted gold, robbed one of my rich patients, for as I told you, I am a physician, was caught and carried back, and my stealings taken from me, while I was sent to prison for years."

"I escaped, but took the guard's life to do so, and came West."

"A reward of some thousands was put upon my head, so that detectives dogged me to the mines, and I was again captured; but I escaped once more by killing the man who held me prisoner, and sought a home among the Sioux."

"There was an epidemic of small-pox among them at the time, and I saved the lives of hundreds, their medicine-man among the rest, and the old medicine-chief gave me his daughter for a wife, and I was called White Buffalo."

"Soon after I was made chief, and now my word is law among the Sioux."

"I have gone back on my own people to curry favor with the red-skins, and, of course, have done many cruel deeds I did not care to be guilty of."

"But I do not like the life, and wish to give it up and you can help me do so."

"How?"

"I will tell you," and the chief drew near to the Pony Rider, and though speaking in English, lowered his voice like a man who had a secret to tell.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE TEMPTATION.

"I HAVE often heard of the terrible Sioux chief, White Buffalo, but never suspected that you were a white man," said Butterfly Billy, while the chief seemed to be meditating upon just how to begin his story.

"Yes, I have tried to conceal the fact that there was a white chief among the Sioux, well knowing that the scouts and soldiers would be that more anxious to dog the red-skins and perhaps capture me."

"You noticed in the fight, night before last, when I saw that the troopers were upon us, I lost no time in leading the retreat."

"But to my story, for as I said, I believe you can help me in getting out of the life I now lead, and, of course, that means I am to work for your interest as well."

"I am willing to be guided by you, chief, for you see how wholly at your mercy I now am."

"And to help me, too?"

"Certainly, Chief White Buffalo," was the ready reply of the Pony Rider.

"Well, to begin, let me tell you that I have a comrade who is on the Overland as a holder-up of coaches, and as I always keep a small band of Indians within calling distance of him for protection in case he should be too hard pressed, so that he can take refuge in my village, he pays me a certain sum out of his gains, you see."

"Yes, I see," said Butterfly Billy, with renewed interest.

"Now, this man you may know, for he has been a bitter foe to Pony Riders, and has made some very good hauls from them of late months."

"What did you say his name is?"

"The Giant General, they call him."

"Oh, yes! I have heard of him often, and he has been the terror of the Pony Riders."

"Now, the Giant General sent for some extra braves not long since, only a week ago, in fact, and stated in his letter to me that either a Pony Rider or a coach would carry through a very large sum of money: he thought as much as sixty thousand dollars, going to the paymaster at Fort M—, and he wished to make no mistake, for if it went by coach he would desire enough warriors with him to make a clean sweep of it, and so I sent him twelve braves."

"To work with him?"

"Yes, for he has a retreat for them, and would hold up the stage somewhere in their neighborhood, you know."

"Now, I trust no man, and my desire to have my braves near the General, was to see that he did not desert me, carrying with him the plunder, you see."

"So my warriors are spies upon him, knowing all of his moves, though he does not suspect it."

"You do well to watch him, for he has evidently deceived you."

"In what respect?"

"The sum to be sent through was sixty thousand, you say, chief?"

"Yes."

"You were to share with him?"

"Yes; to have one-half."

"Now, the amount is eighty-two thousand dollars."

"Ah! how know you this?"

"Did I not tell you that my honesty was tempted by having intrusted to me a large sum of money?"

"Hah! it was sent through by you, and not by coach."

"Exactly."

"But how could you carry such a sum?"

"The money sent to paymasters is in new bills, just out of the treasury, and it is in packages, of ten, twenty, fifty, one-hundred dollar bills, which do not make up such a very large package, and these are fitted into a false padding of the saddle."

"Now, I was the Pony Express Rider selected, and I tell you I could not stand the temptation to get a fortune at one grasp, for I could arrange matters to let the company think that I had been killed, while I could escape southward into Mexico and South America and enjoy my riches."

"And you got the money?" eagerly asked the renegade chief.

"Yes, I laid my plans on one ride, to carry with me a disguise and also another horse, telling them at the station that my other horse had broken down and died on the way."

"I hid the horse and my disguise in a canyon, and when I came through with the money, took the false pad from my saddle and was preparing my plot by killing my horse and disguised as a miner to go southward on the other animal, when I heard hoof-falls and saw a party of soldiers dashing toward me, while a scout stood near watching me."

"You had been followed?"

"Yes, chief; but I knew my horse and fled, and going through a wild canyon quickly hid my treasure."

"At night I supposed I had thrown them off the trail, so went to sleep, and awoke to find the scout and soldiers before me."

"The scout was Texas Jack, and he had been a spy on me, and knew all that I was doing."

"On the way to the fort with me, where they said I would certainly be shot, the soldiers came upon the party who were to attack you, and we went with them, and in the charge I made a dash for liberty, to seek the Sioux, and the rest you know."

"And this money?" eagerly asked the renegade.

"Is where I left it, for I would not admit that I had taken it, but said that road-agents had robbed me of it."

"And how much is it?"

"Eighty-two thousand dollars."

"You are sure?"

"There is that much if there is a dollar."

"Well, now let me tell you what I will do."

"Yes, sir."

"The Giant General has money, and plenty of it, and my braves know where he keeps it."

"Yes."

"He admits to having thirty odd thousand, and I have here something like ten thousand hidden away, which I have gotten by robbery, and have been paid by the Giant General together."

"It will make, with the General's and your

treasure, one hundred and twenty thousand, say, and this we will divide equally together."

"I don't understand you."

"I will tell my chiefs that I am going to see the Giant General, and you are to go with me; do you see?"

"Yes, sir."

"I will carry my riches with me, and when we find the General, we will kill him and have my braves show me where his treasure is."

"I see."

"Then I will leave the braves to shift for themselves, and we will go after your treasure and with it and the other money we will share equally and go together into Mexico."

"But your money and the Giant General's will only be about forty thousand."

"True; but I give your life to you, do you see, which about evens up your putting in the largest sum."

"I see; but when will you go?"

"In a few days."

"You had better start at once, as when the soldiers return to the fort they may send a large search party to follow my trail and look for the treasure, knowing I did not have a good chance to securely hide it."

"You are right, we will start at once, for the soldiers and scouts will be all over the country in a few days after what has happened."

"I am ready, chief, to go out any time."

"Well, I will see my chiefs to-day and get my money, so as to be all ready to-night, and in two days at furthest we will be rich men."

"We will indeed."

Soon after midnight two horsemen rode away from the Indian village, and they were the renegade chief, White Buffalo, and Butterfly Billy, the Black Horse Rider of the Overland!

CHAPTER XIX.

THE OVERLAND DETECTIVE.

THROUGH the night the renegade chief and the Pony Rider rode, until just at dawn they halted for rest and breakfast.

Then, too, the chief wished to get rid of his paint and feathers, in fact, he metamorphosed from the Indian into a pale-face miner, which was the character he intended to assume.

While he was busy unmaking and making his toilet, he asked Butterfly Billy to get wood and make a fire, so as to cook breakfast, for they had a coffee-pot, frying-pan and rations along.

"I tell you," he added, "that I am glad you agreed to my plan, for I did not care to torture you, but if you had not I confess I would have handed you over to the Indians to torture until you confessed where your treasure was hidden."

"I am glad you did not have to do that."

"Yes, so am I; but we are the best of friends now, are we not, pard?"

"Yes, sir, we are," and Butterfly Billy showed no sign of having read the renegade's face so thoroughly as to know that he would be as quickly gotten rid of, after his treasure was found, as would be the Giant General, the chief's ally, when they discovered him.

Then Butterfly Billy went for some wood, and by the time he returned the renegade had cast aside his weapons, and was about to undress for a bath in the brook.

"I want you, White Buffalo, so hold out your hands!"

Had the earth opened to swallow him, the renegade could not have been more startled and surprised than at what he heard and saw.

There stood Butterfly Billy within two feet of him, with a revolver in one hand, cocked and covering him, and a pair of handcuffs in the other, the same that had served the youth so well.

He was speechless with amazement, so paralyzed with fright he could not move, and he quivered like a wind-shaken leaf.

"There you are wise, not to make me kill you," and with a dexterity and quickness that were remarkable, he snapped the irons upon the wrists of the renegade.

This act recalled the man to his senses, and with a bound he sprung upon the youth.

But Butterfly Billy nimbly sprung aside, and with his foot tripped the renegade, who fell heavily, while a blow half-stunned him, and in a moment of time his ironed wrists were lashed firmly to his body.

The man gritted his teeth with fury, and the blood came from his lips where he bit them.

The veins stood out like cords on his forehead and hands, and he looked the picture of mad despair.

At last he said:

"Take my money, and let me go back to the Sioux."

"Oh no, you are worth more on the border than the money you have with you that you have robbed poor miners of."

"Who are you?" hissed the man.

"Butterfly Billy, the Overland Detective."

"Curse you!"

"Thank you; but your curses are going to be like chickens, and go home to roost."

"What do you intend to do with me?"

"Deliver you over to Colonel Carter, of Fort M—."

"He will hang me!" wailed the man.

"Doubtless."

"Is this your friendship for me?"

"I have none."

"See how I treated you."

"How?"

"I saved your life."

"You thought I was a fugitive, and so saved me."

"And are you not one?"

"Not I, for I only put these irons on when I saw I was unable to escape, and I have the key with me."

"They are intended for your friend, the Giant General, whom you meant to murder and rob, and had I gotten a treasure, as I told you, then you would have killed me in my sleep and escaped with all."

"And that money?"

"I simply told you a gigantic lie—that is all."

"Oh, curses upon you!"

"Come, I don't like this neighborhood, for it is too near the Devil's Dominions, meaning your own, so we will depart for safer lands."

The youth turned and found that his horse had strayed some distance away, and so, forcing the renegade to mount his own animal, he bound his feet to the stirrups, and hitching the horse securely, started after the one that had gone astray.

It was no easy task to get near him, and in the pursuit the youth suddenly came to a halt and dropped his hand upon his revolver.

His face flushed and paled, as he stood there gazing down into a canyon, and then he moved cautiously along the ridge and crept down the hill.

Turning into the canyon, he walked noiselessly along until he came to a horse staked out to feed upon the grass that grew plentifully on all sides.

It was a large, long-bodied, long-limbed horse, black as jet, and the youth muttered in a joyous tone:

"The black horse of the Giant General; so the man asleep yonder is the robber himself."

Just a hundred feet away lay the form of a man hidden in blankets, and his face concealed by his wide-brimmed sombrero.

With his revolver in his hand, Butterfly Billy noiselessly moved on up the canyon until he came to within a few feet of the sleeping form.

Then his revolver covered the man, and he sternly uttered the words:

"You are my prisoner! Don't force me to kill you, so surrender!"

The man threw aside his blankets at the sound of a human voice, sprung to his feet, and revealed, not the massive form of the Giant General, but the tall, wiry figure of Buffalo Bill.

CHAPTER XX.

FARDS WELL MET.

THE surprise of Buffalo Bill at suddenly discovering Butterfly Billy standing over him and covering him with a revolver, seemed about equal to the amazement of the Pony Rider in beholding the scout emerge from the blankets.

"Oh, Mr. Cody! how glad I am to see you, but I thought I had the Giant General, sure," cried the youth, as he replaced his revolver and seized the scout's hand.

"Thought I was the Giant General, Butterfly?" and there was just the shadow of a suspicion in the scout's manner. It flashed upon him how strange it was to find the youth just then, when he had been with the red-skins when last seen.

Not noticing the suspicion in the scout's manner, Butterfly Billy responded:

"Yes, for I came upon the horse feeding below in the canyon, and would know him among a thousand as the General's."

"Ah, yes," and Cody's face quickly cleared.

"I found the outlaw's horse tied to a tree on the trail one day over a year ago, and so appropriated him, as you had gone; but he really belongs to you, for you captured him, and the Giant General kidnapped him the night of his escape."

The face of Butterfly Billy flushed at this, for he recalled how he had aided the outlaw's escape for information he had given him, and that

he had promised him he would leave the superb black horse at a certain place on the trail on a given day for him, the Pony Rider, to go and get.

He had gone his way to Texas, and the outlaw leaving the horse as he had promised, the animal had been found and appropriated by Buffalo Bill.

The scout saw at once how it was that he had been mistaken for the Giant General, and the Pony Rider added:

"You are a large man, and wrapped in your blankets, with your sombrero hiding your face, and the horse staked out yonder, I was sure I had the Giant General."

"And what a disappointment for you to find only me."

"No indeed, for of all men you are the man I wished most to see, and I'll get the Giant General another time; but I am more than glad to find you here, for you can help me."

"I am your man, Butterfly."

"Oh I know that, Mr. Cody; but come, help me to catch my runaway horse, and I will show you something that I have done."

"It was while trying to catch my horse that I saw your camp from yonder ridge."

"Yes, it was night when I camped here, and now I see the place by day I was very negligent to halt in such a place; but I was worn out, and must have been very sound asleep not to waken up when day broke, and when you came. Why Black Bravo even went back on me, and he is as good as a watch-dog and always warns me of danger."

"He knew me, I guess, for you know I was his master for some time; but will you go with me now?"

"Certainly," and quickly saddling his horse, while the Pony Rider rolled up his blanket, the scout was ready in five minutes.

"I don't wish to remain any longer in this neighborhood than is necessary," said the youth, and they set off in search of the runaway horse.

Mounted upon his black the scout soon spied the horse, and riding near dropped the lariat over his head.

Then Butterfly Billy mounted his horse and the two rode back up the range to where the Pony Rider had left his prisoner.

"What are you doing here, Mr. Cody, in this dangerous neighborhood, may I ask, for I supposed you had gone on to the fort?" asked the Pony Rider.

"It was on the tip end of my tongue to ask you the same question, Butterfly; but as you have the call on me I will say that I was searching for you."

"For me?"

"Yes."

"And why?"

"You were the one who saved the train from capture, I hear?"

"Yes, I saw the danger you were in, so rode to the fort and brought aid."

"And you planned the attack?"

"I told Captain Allen what I deemed was best to be done."

"It was just the thing to do, and if you had been a half hour later, not one of the train would have been alive."

"I owe you my life, my dear boy."

"Well, I'm glad I was able to serve you, and happy that the train escaped."

"But did you not go on with the train to the fort?"

"Yes."

"But you are here now?"

"I am."

"Please tell me why?"

"Well, I had but a very short stay in the fort, after our arrival, before I was sent for to go to Captain Allen's quarters, and though the order came from Miss Mattie Carter I obeyed it as though it had come from her father the colonel."

"I found there Miss Ivy Allen and Miss Mattie, and their object in sending for me was to have me go in search of you."

"Of me," and the youth's face flushed.

"Yes, for they are as truly your friends as I am, and Miss Mattie was determined that I should go and rescue you from the clutches of the red-skins."

"It was so good of her, but it was forcing you to take big chances, my friend."

"Well, Billy, I owed you my life, and I wanted to save yours, and then Miss Mattie's pretty little head got up a plan that would be of great help to me."

"And what was that, may I ask?"

"We had some thirteen red-skins who were wounded in the fight and captured, and whom we carried with our wounded to the fort, so Miss Mattie wished me to communicate with the Sioux

in some way and offer to exchange these warrior prisoners for you."

"Bless her sweet soul."

"The Sioux would have done it, and the only trouble was to get a chance to communicate with them and this I intended to do by capturing an Indian sentinel and sending him to White Buffalo with a message as to what I would do, and to have him send an answer to the Lone Pine, for then I could guard against treachery."

"Yet you would have run a terrible risk; but after all I was not to be deserted, was I?"

"By no means, for you have true friends in Fort M—, you may rest assured."

"Yes, and a true friend not now at the fort, whose name is Buffalo Bill; but you had gotten this far on your mission?"

"Yes—but look yonder!" and as quick as lightning Buffalo Bill was on his guard, for he had caught sight of a horse and rider in the thicket ahead of him, and once more a thought of suspicion against the youth flashed through his mind, for the one he saw, a glance had told him was an Indian.

"Oh, don't mind him, for he is a prisoner," said the Pony Rider, noticing the scout's movement.

"A prisoner?"

"Yes."

"An Indian?"

"Oh, yes."

"And a chief, for I saw his head-dress of feathers."

"Yes, it is the White Buffalo."

"The White Buffalo? Chief of the Sioux?"

"Yes, and he is my prisoner," was the cool reply of the young Pony Rider, and Buffalo Bill gazed at him in wonder, and a look that plainly demanded an explanation.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE THREE HORSEMEN.

THE look upon the face of Buffalo Bill when the Pony Rider coolly informed him that the horseman whom he saw through the bushes was none other than the White Buffalo, head chief of the Sioux, and his prisoner, caused Butterfly Billy to burst forth in laughter.

He said then as he rode forward:

"Come, let us get White Buffalo and move out of this, as I do not wish to remain longer in so dangerous a locality than there is actual need for, and Sioux scouts may come upon us at any minute."

"Lead on, Butterfly, for I am at your heels," and the scout went prepared for any surprise that might greet him.

But he soon discovered that the horse was made fast to a tree, and that the rider was bound to his back.

A closer look showed that the rider was a chief, and an ejaculation broke from the lips of Buffalo Bill as he cried:

"It is the chief who led the attack on the train!"

"Yes."

"And that is White Buffalo?"

"He is."

"And White Buffalo is a white man?"

"True."

"I knew that the man I saw as chief of the Sioux that day was a white man."

"You were right, for there he is."

"And a renegade?"

"Of course; but here we are."

As he spoke, Butterfly Billy rode up to the chief and said:

"I was anxious about leaving you so long, chief, but my horse led me a dance; yet I am glad of it, for in following him I came upon a lone camp, and found an old friend in it."

"Let me present you to Buffalo Bill of whom you have often heard, for your warriors are as afraid of him as of an evil spirit."

"This was a well arranged trap of yours, boy, and I was a fool to trust you."

"You certainly were; but come, we must be off, for just now we are not red-skin hunting."

"No, you have game enough for one day, Butterfly," and turning to the prisoner the scout continued:

"Well, Mr. White Buffalo, I never knew you were a renegade white man before; but you have shown yourself equally cruel with the Indians, and I guess it will go hard with you."

"It will be no more than hanging," growled the prisoner.

"No, I guess not; but hanging strikes me as being just about as bad as can be."

"Well, let us move, Butterfly, for as you say this neighborhood is sickly for pale-faces," and the scout led the way down the hill, while Butterfly Billy followed side by side with the rene-

gade chief, and with the rein of the latter over his saddle-horn.

After reaching the level plain, Buffalo Bill dropped back alongside of the prisoner and the three rode abreast.

"How did it all happen, Billy?" he asked after awhile.

"Well, it was my good luck throughout, for I started to warn Captain Rosafy that the force of red-skins was double what I had supposed, and that he had best not leave his vantage-ground to charge them, as they would be run down.

"In the early dawn I did not notice some red-skins holding a number of ponies until I was upon them, and looking behind I discovered the prairie black with those who were in full flight from the soldiers, and so I played a trick, slipped the handcuffs I had with me upon my wrists, and pretended to be an escaped prisoner.

"It took splendidly, and White Buffalo coming along I just went along with him, and how we escaped death from Captain Rosafy's ambush is a miracle to me, for the bullets flew all about us.

"But we did escape and I went on to the village with the chief," and Butterfly Billy went on to tell the rest of his story, and how he had deceived the chief.

"I tell you, Mr. Cody, it was refreshing to talk of the money I had intrusted to me and how I had robbed the Government of it.

"I agreed to all of the chief's little plan to kill the Giant General, and I knew that I would have been his next victim, had I possessed the money I pretended to.

"So having inveigled the chief to come with me, I simply got him at my mercy and made him prisoner."

"Butterfly, you are a brick, and if the men don't go wild over your capture, I am much mistaken; but let me tell you to ride on now to the timber where the train was attacked, while I dash away to a point five miles away and leave a note on a tree there for Lieutenant Barden, who is to come there with a few men and await a call for me.

"They came by a circuitous trail through the foot-hills, so we cannot meet them; but my note will send them back to the fort, for they were to support me in my effort to free you, and will not reach the retreat before night.

"I will ride rapidly and overtake you at the timber, which was the scene of the White Buffalo's last fight."

"I'll wait there for you, Mr. Cody, for, as you came out after me, you must take me back with you," and while Cody took a trail leading off to a distant range of hills, Butterfly Billy and his prisoner held slowly on toward the appointed rendezvous.

Arriving there, he halted for rest and dinner, and by the time he had the meal ready Buffalo Bill arrived, his horse showing that he had ridden rapidly.

"I stuck the notice upon the tree, so it will be all right," he said, and, after an hour's rest, the three horsemen continued on their way toward the fort.

It was near the sunset hour when the sentinel on duty in the tower reported three horsemen coming across the prairie toward the fort.

The report was soon varied by the news that one was Buffalo Bill, and next came the information that one of his companions was none other than Butterfly Billy, the Black Horse Rider of the Overland.

Then it became known that the third one of the party was an Indian in his paint and feathers, a chief, the scouts said, and, by the time the three rode into the fort, all the garrison were there.

Buffalo Bill had met with good fortune, and, far sooner than was expected, he had brought back the Pony Rider and had a prisoner also.

The troopers under Lieutenant Barden had left Fort M— at noon to go to the retreat, but they had taken another trail, so missed the three horsemen.

Straight up to headquarters rode the three men, and, dismounting, they entered and were met by Colonel Carter, just as Mattie Carter rushed over to see Ivy Allen; and, almost breathless with joy, cried:

"Oh, Ivy! Buffalo Bill has rescued him!"

"Well, Cody, back again, and successful, I see.

"Permit me to congratulate you upon your success, and to welcome you back, Butterfly Billy," said Colonel Carter, and he held forth his hands to each.

"I'm back, Colonel Carter, but the success is not mine, but Billy's here, for he made his escape, bagged a most important prisoner, and captured me, too," and Buffalo Bill laughed at

the remembrance, while White Buffalo muttered a savage oath, and said:

"You seem to enjoy the situation, but it's death to me."

"And who is this man, Cody?" sternly asked Colonel Carter.

"Who is he, Butterfly, for he is your game?" asked the scout.

"The man whom Buffalo Bill said was a pale-face, when he saw him at the head of the Indians in their attack on the supply train, Colonel Carter, and who is known to you as White Buffalo, the Chief of the Sioux."

"Great God! can this be possible?" asked the amazed officer.

"It is not only possible, sir, but true, as you will see when I tell you what I know of him," answered Butterfly Billy, and he quickly told to Colonel Carter and Captain Allen, who just then entered the quarters of the commandant, the story of his adventure, visit to the Sioux village and the plot about the gold he had formed to capture the renegade chief, all of which the officers most attentively listened to, with frequent words of praise upon the youth's pluck.

"Butterfly has the laugh on me, colonel, for I went out to rescue him and he captured me," said Buffalo Bill in his cheery way.

"Yes, Cody, but you did your duty and certainly brought him back, and that is what you went for, so you can find some comfort in that," responded the colonel, and then he added:

"Now take our young hero to your quarters and primp up and then come both of you and dine with me, for I wish my daughter and Miss Ivy to hear the story from your own lips, for it is like a romance.

"Orderly, send the sergeant of the guard here for this prisoner," and ten minutes after the renegade chief was in the fort prison.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE ALLY OF THE BLACK HORSE RIDER.

WHEN the situation of Butterfly Billy's going with the red-skins, apparently without being a prisoner, was explained at the fort, those who had held suspicion against him felt ashamed of themselves, and endeavored all in their power to make amends for it, or at least intended to do so, only the next morning they learned that the Pony Rider had departed at midnight with dispatches.

There was not a man in the fort who did not rejoice in the capture of the White Buffalo, whose evil deeds had become a terror through the land, and when it became known that he was not a red-skin, but a renegade white man, one whose appearance and conversation showed that he had been born and reared in genteel society, the feeling of bitterness became intense.

As for the prisoner, he paced to and fro in no enviable mood, gazing from the windows at either end of his prison at every turn.

He had been made comfortable, but he was placed under a treble guard, and the man who carried his meals to him was always accompanied by a soldier, so that there could be no underhand work done.

Thus the days passed away, and one afternoon Butterfly Billy was seen coming like a bird across the prairie.

He was mounted upon one of his fine blacks, and the animal came on at a terrific pace.

Of course many thought the Black Horse Rider must be bringing some fateful news; but then others said that it was Butterfly Billy's usual way of riding.

Arriving at the fort the soldiers greeted him with three hearty cheers, which he responded to by doffing his scarlet cap and waving it over his head.

Then he sprung from his panting horse and entered the quarters of Colonel Carter, who greeted him most cordially, as did also Mattie, who was with her father at the time, but I must say that she demurely entered the room only a short while before the arrival of the Black Horse Rider, having seen him afar off on the prairie, and recognized his black steed and gorgeous make-up.

"Colonel Carter, I have news of the White Buffalo, sir, for in searching him I found several time-worn papers which gave me the address of certain old-time friends of his, and to these I telegraphed from Omaha, and received reply that Doctor Edward Orton was a fugitive from justice on two indictments, one for robbery, the other murder, and two persons are now on their way here, his former client and a detective to identify him.

"They will come through on Bob Burt's stage, sir, and I would ask you to kindly have an ambulance at the station to meet them."

"Certainly I will, and with this evidence, which you were wise enough to get, and your own testimony, there will be no difficulty in bringing the renegade at once to trial, and that will mean an execution to quickly follow.

"You would make an excellent detective, Butterfly Billy."

The youth smiled and responded:

"Thank you, Colonel Carter; but may I ask you to take my testimony as soon as these two witnesses arrive, for I have an important matter on hand that I must attend to."

"Certainly; but are you off on some other desperate mission, my young friend?"

"Frankly, sir, I have a scheme for the capture of the Giant General."

"Ah! that is desperate work; but I hope you do not intend to be so rash as to undertake the capture of this man alone?"

"Yes, sir, for I can see my way clearer alone, as a number of men could do nothing where the Giant General is concerned, for he has allies people do not know of."

"I have suspected it."

"I hope, sir, the capture of the renegade chief has not become known on the border."

"No, for I allowed no one outside of my staff and the guards to know just who the man was," replied the colonel, and then Butterfly Billy took his leave and went over to the quarters of Buffalo Bill, where he always made his home when at the fort.

In fact, he had become known as Buffalo Bill's *protege*, and the scout regarded him with sincere affection.

The scout had just returned from a prairie ride of a few days, and warmly welcomed the Black Horse rider back to the fort.

"Well, Billy, what news?" he asked, with interest, for he seemed to feel that the youth had something to communicate.

"Well, Mr. Cody, there is news, for I traced the White Buffalo to his old home, and he is wanted there as well as here, and there will be two men here to-morrow to identify him, so that the general can, with my testimony, try the man."

"And hang him."

"Oh, of course, for he richly deserves it, and my testimony will show what he is here."

"And I also can swear that he is the man I saw at the head of the Sioux, if further corroboration is needed, and found you had as a prisoner on your way from the Indian village."

"Oh, yes, there is no escape for him; but if he was half a man I would feel sorry for him, but he is too mean and cruel to deserve a feeling of sympathy."

"He certainly is, Butterfly, but you have something else to communicate?"

"Yes, I wish you to help me as soon as this trial ends."

"In any way that I can I will gladly do so."

"I want you to dress me up as an Indian."

"What?"

"Yes; I'll cut my hair short, and I have got a wig that is a perfect one for an Indian."

"Then I have a regular suit of buckskins, leggings, moccasins, and all, and the head-dress of a sub-chief."

"The night I leave here I wish to have you dress me up so I can out-Injun Injun, for I have a dye that will stain my face, neck, hands and arms, so that they will be of the right hue, only it will last but a few days."

"And what is all this for, Butterfly?"

"I told you of what White Buffalo said about the Giant General being his ally?"

"Yes."

"Well, he has a dozen red-skins hiding along the trail, who serve as a guard for him, and so I shall seek the General out and have a chat with him."

"Butterfly Billy, are you mad?"

"No, Mr. Cody, I am in my sober senses."

"It is madness for you to think of doing such a thing as you propose."

"No, I am very cautious, as you know, and I can accomplish what I wish, I am sure."

"At least I shall try it."

"Let me go with you and it is a bargain."

"Well, you can go if you will just keep in the back-ground, so as to help me out when I need aid."

"I'll agree, so it's a bargain," was the response, and the two then began to arrange their plans for the dangerous undertaking which Butterfly Billy had agreed upon, for the capture of the Lone Highwayman of the Overland.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE RENEGADE'S TRIAL.

THE ambulance was sent to the station, as Butterfly Billy requested, and the two men who

had come out to swear away the life of a fugitive from justice arrived in the fort and were given accommodations with the hostler, who kept a boarding-house.

Then the witnesses went with Butterfly Billy to the cabin where White Buffalo was under guard, the door was thrown open and they stood in the presence of the prisoner.

His face was pale, his brow clouded, and his look almost fiendish in his hatred and despair.

"Curse you, boy, have you come to give me another look at your hateful face?" growled the prisoner.

"Yes, and to give two gentlemen from the East a look at yours, Doctor Edward Orton," was the reply of the Black Horse Rider.

The man started and his face became the hue of death, while he said hoarsely:

"Why do you call me Edward Orton?"

"Is it not your name?"

"No."

"Are you not from H—, Connecticut?"

"I am not."

"Well, gentlemen, what say you?" and the Pony Rider motioned for the two witnesses to enter.

The prisoner staggered under the blow of recognition, and the detective calmly said:

"Well, Doctor Edward Orton, we meet again."

"I do not know you, sir."

"But I know you, though your face has lost much of its old-time refinement, and is rather fiendish-looking now."

"What do you say, Jailer Sterritt, for you were the doctor's last keeper, excepting the short time I had him in the mines, when he killed poor Ramsey and escaped."

"That is the man, Detective Dunlap."

"I am not, for I never saw either of you before."

"I was captured by the Indians as a child, and reared among them."

"How came you by the papers, surgical and medicine-case of Doctor Edward Orton, then?" asked Butterfly Billy.

"You had them, and are trying to swear away my life."

"No, I deeply feel the life of any one upon my hands; but your evil career has caused all to be merciless toward you."

"Let us go, for there is no doubt but that this is your man," and Butterfly Billy turned away, and was followed out of the cabin by the detective and jailer.

"Well, sir, you get the reward of five thousand for this man," said the detective.

"Thank you, but I do not care for blood-money, and besides, there is some one for Doctor Orton to leave his property to."

"You refer to his daughter?"

"Yes, for you told me he had lost his wife before he went to the bad, and left a little daughter, who was now living with a poor relative."

"Yes."

"Well, for my part I will give to you and the jailer five hundred each of the reward, and the balance, with other money now in Colonel Carter's hands, and belonging to the prisoner, must go to the child, and the paymaster of the fort will see that it is placed in the proper hands for her."

"Well, you're a strange one, young man, to give up your reward, and I judge, too, that you are not overburdened with riches, seeing that you are under pay as a Pony Rider," said the detective.

"No, I am not very rich; but I am not poor, either," was the reply, and the prisoner having been identified and the Black Horse Rider being anxious to get away, Colonel Carter ordered the man to be at once brought up for trial.

White, stern-faced, and with an evil glitter in his eyes, a look that turned to the most utter malignity when his gaze rested upon the Black Horse Rider, Edward Orton, *alias* the White Buffalo, faced his judges and accusers.

He pleaded "not guilty," and said that he was the White Buffalo, but having been reared among the Indians since his childhood, he had been taught that the whites were his foes.

He was asked by Captain Allen, who was the judge advocate, how old he was when he was taken by the Indians.

His reply was that he was six years of age, and that his parents had been killed and his home burned.

He told his story with a look of perfect truth, and added that Doctor Edward Orton had been captured by the Sioux, and was for a long while a prisoner, and dying in camp, had left him his case of instruments and medicines.

More, he stated that he had become such a

thorough Indian, that he had felt that he was doing no wrong in fighting the pale-faces.

As to his resembling Doctor Orton, he said that all the Indians had considered him so like him, that they called the doctor the "White Buffalo's Brother."

The story of the renegade had a decided effect, so well was it told and with such an air of truth.

And this was increased when the two witnesses were called on to swear to their man, and asked if they could remember any distinguishing mark about him.

Yes, they both could, for Doctor Orton had on his left arm his initials, "E. O." in a shield, pricked into the arm with india ink.

Both arms were examined for the mark, but there was none there!

The prisoner smiled, and the witnesses were nonplused.

They then went upon the stand and told their story, but after having heard the one of the prisoner, and not found the mark on his arm, they were unwilling to swear to the identity of the man, and it began to look as though a great mistake had been made, and some whispers were heard that the Black Horse Rider had been a trifle too previous.

Buffalo Bill then took the stand and swore to this: That the prisoner and the man who had led the Sioux in their fight, and whom he had found as Butterfly Billy's prisoner in the foothills, was one and the same.

This the prisoner, however, did not deny, and his confession that he had been reared among the Indians accounted for it.

Then Butterfly Billy was called to the stand, and he asked to tell his story in his own way, and to have the right to ask the prisoner a few questions.

After some argument pro and con, it was granted.

Then he told his story of his being cut off from the soldiers, and how he had deceived them into the belief that he was a fugitive.

Then of his story about being the bearer of the treasure, and his plot with the prisoner to kill the Giant General and rob him.

"This is but a boy's story against mine," said the prisoner, and he added:

"He is ambitious of fame, has been spoilt by adoration, and is willing to sacrifice me to gain favor and a name."

It did look to some as though the prisoner might be right.

But Butterfly Billy showed no uneasiness, and went on with the story as the facts had occurred.

Then he asked the judge advocate to request the prisoner to tell if he had ever been among civilized people, since his capture.

He had not.

Butterfly Billy then referred to the language used by a man who had been captured at seven years of age, and been reared where he never had heard the English language spoken.

"Take, for instance, such words as 'adoration,' 'ambition' and 'sacrifice,' and see if they were such as a child could use, and remember for thirty-five years."

This was a severe set-back, and continuing, Butterfly Billy said:

"Now, I have nothing to gain in all this except the credit of capturing the chief of the Sioux, who is a renegade white man, and having extricated myself from a very ugly situation."

"This man says that my story is false, and yet why did he leave his camp with me? why did he give me the chance to capture him? and more, why did he bring with him the ten thousand dollars now in the possession of Colonel Carter?"

"The reward offered for him, which he says that I wish to get, I have already disposed of, by giving one thousand to be divided among these two witnesses, and the other four thousand, with what Colonel Carter has, is to be left to the prisoner's daughter."

"If he has never been in civilization, how is it that his teeth have been skillfully filled with gold."

"I beg the judge advocate to examine the prisoner's teeth, and to say if an Indian dentist did the work?"

This blow fell heavily and staggered the prisoner, who murmured:

"Doctor Orton filled them for me."

"Show me a single dentist's instrument in the case left (you say Doctor Orton left), or a piece of gold-leaf with which to fill a tooth."

"Again, the fact that the india ink stamp once upon the prisoner's arm is not now there, let me tell you that when I was a boy a sailor pricked upon my arm a ship, flag and my name."

"My mother regretted it so keenly that I tried to get it off, and one day a Texas scout told me that there was an old Comanche medicine-man who could take it off for me, for the Indians possessed a secret for removing stains that the white race had not."

"The old Comanche was friendly to the Texans, and I went to him, and see, my arm is stainless, for the stamp was right here," and he showed the place where it had been.

"Now the Sioux must also know this secret, and thus Doctor Orton removed the stain from his arm."

This was all that the Black Horse Rider had to say, and when he had finished, the wavering opinions of the guilt of the prisoner had changed, and no one doubted longer.

This the prisoner saw and he could scarcely rise from his seat when commanded to do so.

At length, by a great effort he got command over himself, and received his sentence without a word.

And that sentence was that within two weeks he was to be hanged for his crimes.

Back to his prison-pen he went under a strong guard, and many sought to congratulate Butterfly Billy upon his triumph, but found that he had slipped away.

At midnight two horsemen left the fort, accompanied by a pack-horse, and one of those two was Buffalo Bill.

The other appeared to be an Indian chief, and was mounted upon a black horse.

CHAPTER XXIV.

BUTTERFLY BILLY'S STORY.

THE two horsemen who left Fort M— at midnight did so with the full consent of Colonel Carter.

Their mission was known to but five persons in the fort, the commandant, Colonel Carter, Captain Allen, the post adjutant and Ivy Allen and Mattie Carter.

For some reason these two young ladies could not be kept out of the secret, for their eyes and ears were open to all that was going on, and Mattie having heard Buffalo Bill arrange with her father to call before leaving the fort late that night, she had posted Ivy and asked her to spend the evening with her.

All hints of the colonel and Captain Allen to get the young ladies to retire were useless, and at last Cody came in and Colonel Carter said laughingly:

"This looks like a plot, Allen, so we will have to let them into the secret I suppose."

"What secret, papa?" asked Mattie with an innocence that won Ivy's admiration.

"Well, Cody goes on a scout to-night, along with a certain handsome rider of jet-black horses, and I have a few instructions for them before they depart."

"Why does not this Black Horse Rider come and get his orders then, sir?" asked Mattie, who wished to see the young hero before he departed.

"Because, Miss Mattie, the Pony Rider is not in visiting toilet," said Buffalo Bill.

"Go and fetch him, Cody, and let us see how he will muster," said the colonel, and when the scout returned ten minutes after, he was accompanied by what appeared to be a young Indian chief in his war paint and costume.

Those present were surprised, and gazed upon him with admiration, for the cheat was perfect.

"You are an artist, Cody, for the work is perfect," said the colonel.

"It was Butterfly's idea, sir, and I but carried it out; but is not the dye on his skin the very hue of an Indian?"

"Perfect, and if your broken Sioux does not betray you, Butterfly, you will pass anywhere."

"He speaks Sioux well, sir, and will get through all right, for he has the nerve to do it; but we must be off, sir," and with hasty farewells the two departed upon their secret expedition.

An hour after sunrise the following morning they reached a plain in the mountains which Buffalo Bill said would be a safe retreat.

It was at the head of a canyon, and a strong place in case of attack.

The pack-horse was stripped and a comfortable, though temporary, camp made, and the horses made secure by their stake-ropes.

Then the two pards went off on a scout, each taking a different course.

It was night when they returned, Cody arriving a short while before his *protege*, and he at once began to prepare supper.

"Well, Billy, what have you discovered?" he asked.

"Trails that are fresh, of an iron-shod horse, some two miles from here, and which does not follow the Overland Trail, but goes parallel with it, tapping it every half mile or so."

"It was made by the horse of the Giant General."

"Ah! you have made some discovery?"

"Yes, I have seen the Giant General."

"Thank Heaven!"

"I could have killed him, for he passed within easy range of my rifle; but I refrained, as you told me that he must be taken alive."

"Yes, he must be, for upon what he tells me much depends."

"Very well, you have got him placed at least, for I tracked him, after he passed, to where I am certain he has his lair."

"It is on a ridge that is hard to climb, and there seems to be but one way to get up, though he must have a means of retreat also."

"To-morrow early I will guide you to the ridge, and you can go on up and see him, and you may be sure that I will be within call if wanted."

"You noble fellow; but did you see any of his red-skin scouts, that White Buffalo let him have?"

"Not a sign of one, and we must be on the lookout for them."

"Yes, we must, but the Giant General is my first love, and to-morrow I strike his trail and leave it not until it ends in his death or mine, if he does not tell me what I would know, for he alone can do it," and the youth spoke with an earnestness that convinced the scout that he meant all that he said.

After a hearty supper they sought their blankets, and slept through the night.

It was dawn when they arose, had breakfast, and soon after started on their way to find the trail of the Giant General.

Butterfly Billy went on horseback, riding the Indian pony which they had brought along as a pack-animal, and which was the large spotted mustang which White Buffalo had ridden away from the Sioux village.

He had also on the pony an Indian saddle and bridle, and in his rig of a red-skin certainly looked the young warrior to the tepee born.

"He is still on the ridge, Billy, unless he has gone away by some other trail, which I do not believe, for this is not stage day and there is nothing to call him out of his den," said Buffalo Bill examining the trail closely.

"My good friend, I intended to tell you last night a secret, but had I talked over the matter it would have gotten me to thinking and I would have lost a night's rest, which I needed."

"Now I wish to tell you, so that you can understand why I did not wish to kill the Giant General, and also, if I should be killed, to beg of you to take up the trail where my death would leave it off."

"Command me, Pard Billy, and I am your pard unto death."

"I know that well; but to my story."

"My father I do not remember, for he died when I was a mere child, and my mother, from some sad happenings in her life, sought to hide herself from her kindred and friends, and found a home in Texas."

"She made a lovely home there, and I was happy, and I believe that she was too."

"But one night our home was raided by a band of outlaws from across the Rio Grande, and who were known as the Wolves of Mexico."

"Their chief had won the name of Captain Coyote, his real name being Wolf, I believe."

"Well, an old friend, a lover of my mother's, whom she had been forced to discard to marry a rich man, at the command of her parents, went to California and dug a fortune in the mines."

"Then he came and settled near us, and was made captain of our company of Ranchero Rangers."

"One night the Wolves of Mexico, led by Captain Coyote, attacked the settlement."

"It would have been a surprise had I not been out hunting and discovered the camp of the outlaws, while they were waiting to come in to the attack."

"Warned by me, we were on our guard, and beat off the raiders, but my poor mother was kidnapped by them, and so, also, was the friend I speak of, Major Mabrey."

"One of the outlaws, by name Yankee Ross, I saved from being hanged, and he made his escape; but I took the trail, and after three years came here, as you know."

"The man Yankee Kit, was he whom I had known as Yankee Ross, and he was but the lieu-

tenant of Captain Coyote, who was the power behind the throne."

"I captured the Giant General and he told me that my mother was dead, and that Captain Coyote had buried her in the mountains near Castle Rock."

"Because he told me the truth, it was I who aided him to escape from Fort M—, and I am ever so glad that the soldier whom he wounded that night did not die, and now you can understand why I gave the poor sentinel a present of a few hundred dollars."

"Yes, I understand now," replied Cody, quietly.

"Well, the Giant General did not meet me as promised, but wrote me a note and left it at the place where he was to meet me."

"With this note, telling me all, I started to find my mother's grave, and who should I discover there but the poor man who had been our friend."

"His captivity had nearly turned his brain, and he was living in a cabin there, guarding the grave."

"I have seen both the grave and the cabin, Billy, but little did I know of its history, that your mother lay buried there."

"She does not."

"Ah!"

"No, for I went to Texas with my friend, Major Mabrey, and we returned to our old work as rancheros."

"But some months ago a peddler came along, and I recognized him as Yankee Kit, and made him my prisoner."

"Then he told me, under fear of death, that the Giant General had left the band, spent his money, and he had given him funds, so that he had come back to the Overland and begun again his life of outlawry."

"He told me too that my mother was not dead, and that Captain Coyote was the secret chief of the Mounted Miners of the Overland, and the pard of the Giant General, who knew just where to find him."

"I left Yankee Kit with Major Mabrey as a prisoner, until I discovered the truth, and set out again upon the trail."

"I went to Castle Rock and opened the grave, and instead of my mother's long golden hair on the one buried there, were the short black locks of a Mexican woman, just as Yankee Kit had told me I would find."

"Then I went to Omaha, saw the manager of the Overland, and took the trail again, nominally as a Pony Rider, but really as a detective."

"If I capture the Giant General now alive, then I shall know all."

"If I am killed, then I beg of you to take up my trail and rescue my poor mother from the fearful life she must endure."

"I will do it, Billy, I swear it."

"Tell her how I strove to find her, and bid her return to the old ranch in Texas."

"I will; but I do not have an idea of your dying, for you are not built that way, Billy," cheerily said the scout.

"I am only preparing against accident, you know."

"All right, now go ahead and stir up the tiger in his den, and if you need me, call, and I'll be near."

The youth shook the honest hand of the noble scout, and mounting his horse, rode on up the ridge.

CHAPTER XXV.

A CONFESSION.

Up the steep trail rode the disguised Pony Rider, until at last he dismounted, to spare his horse, and led him up to the top of the ridge.

As he was about to mount to ride on, he suddenly beheld the tall form of the Giant General not thirty feet from him, and his rifle was at a ready.

He turned and called out:

"The great chief, White Buffalo, leads me to his pale-face brother the Gold Shoulders."

This was the name the Sioux had given the outlaw on account of the massive gold epaulettes he wore.

"I am glad to see the young chief, the friend of my brother, White Buffalo," replied the Giant General in very bad Sioux, for he knew little of the language, and this the Pony Rider was delighted to discover.

Then motioning to the supposed Sioux to follow him, he led the way back along the ridge for a hundred feet to where there was a small cabin near a spring of water, while, hitherto not far away, was the steed of the outlaw, also a

black animal, and a splendid specimen of horse-flesh.

Knowing something of the customs of the Sioux, the youth, when he dismounted, raised his hands above his head, and then taking off his weapons, a revolver, tomahawk, old-style rifle, and bow and arrows, laid them on the ground.

The Giant General at once did the same, as a proof that he also meant to have peace, and then led the way to a log and sat down, the supposed red-skin doing the same.

Taking out his pipe, the outlaw lighted it and gave a few whiffs, and handed it to the Black Horse Rider, who did likewise.

"Now, what has my red brother to say?" he asked.

"That you are again my prisoner, General!" and the disguised Black Horse Rider covered the man's heart with a revolver.

A yell of rage from the giant outlaw as he thrust his hand into his bosom, and it returned with a revolver.

Then, in self-defense, Butterfly Billy pulled trigger, but he lowered the weapon so as not to pierce the man's heart.

The outlaw fell at the shot, but he pulled trigger, too, and his bullet cut its way through the shoulder of the youth, but, unheeding his wound, he knelt by the side of the man he had shot, and cried earnestly:

"Sol Soule, death is upon you, and for the love of God tell me what you know of Captain Coyote and my mother, for she is not the one at rest in that grave near Castle Rock?"

The outlaw answered in a low tone:

"I believed so when I told you, now I know that she was not dead then."

"But is now?"

"Yes."

"You swear this?"

"Yes."

"When, and where did she die?"

"I believe that Coyote killed her, though he said she took her own life—that she sprung from a cliff into a mountain river; but I believe he threw her off. At any rate, she is avenged, for I killed Coyote."

"My God, man, I can grasp your hand in friendship for this act, and—"

Butterfly Billy said no more, but reeled and fell, just as Buffalo Bill came rushing upon the scene.

Cody looked to his boy pard closely.

"The wound is not dangerous, but he has fainted from the loss of blood. I must get him to the fort," decided the scout.

So saying he dressed the wound as well as he could, and not until then turned to the Giant General.

"And he is dead; so that ends it all, I suppose."

With this the scout, with real humane regard for the dead outlaw, in spite of his crimes, hastily set to work and dug a shallow grave, into which he placed the body, and laid logs over it to prevent the wolves from digging it up.

Then he saw that Butterfly Billy was feeling stronger, and aided him to mount his horse; while he, after a hasty search of the cabin, sprung upon the back of the outlaw's steed and led the way down the ridge trail.

The ride back to the camp took half an hour, and then the two rode slowly on their way to the fort.

The scout was as tender of his young pard as a nurse is of an infant, and halted often for him to rest, for the youth had lost so much blood that he was painfully weak.

At last the fort appeared in sight, and an hour after Butterfly Billy found himself in Surgeon DeLamater's quarters, for the lovely wife of the surgeon insisted upon having it so, saying that the hero could have the better care.

It was long weeks before Butterfly Billy arose from his bed, for fever set in and his life at times was despaired of.

But, at last, he became himself again, and had the pleasure of knowing that he had been ordered to Fort M—, as a lieutenant on the staff of Colonel Carter; and, better still, that he had really had the heart of his commander's beautiful daughter.

He wrote to Major Mabrey to let Yankee Kit go, for he had told him the truth, and that he might expect him home when he got his first leave of absence.

And out at Fort M— Butterfly Billy is still remembered as a young hero, and always spoken of as Buffalo Bill's protegee.

THE END.

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